the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 25, 2004 • $3.95

KERRY'S MALICE
WILLIAM KRISTOL

The Home Stretch

ANDREW FERGUSON goes to Austin, Ground Zero for Bush haters

MATTHEW CONTINETTI rides the Bush bus

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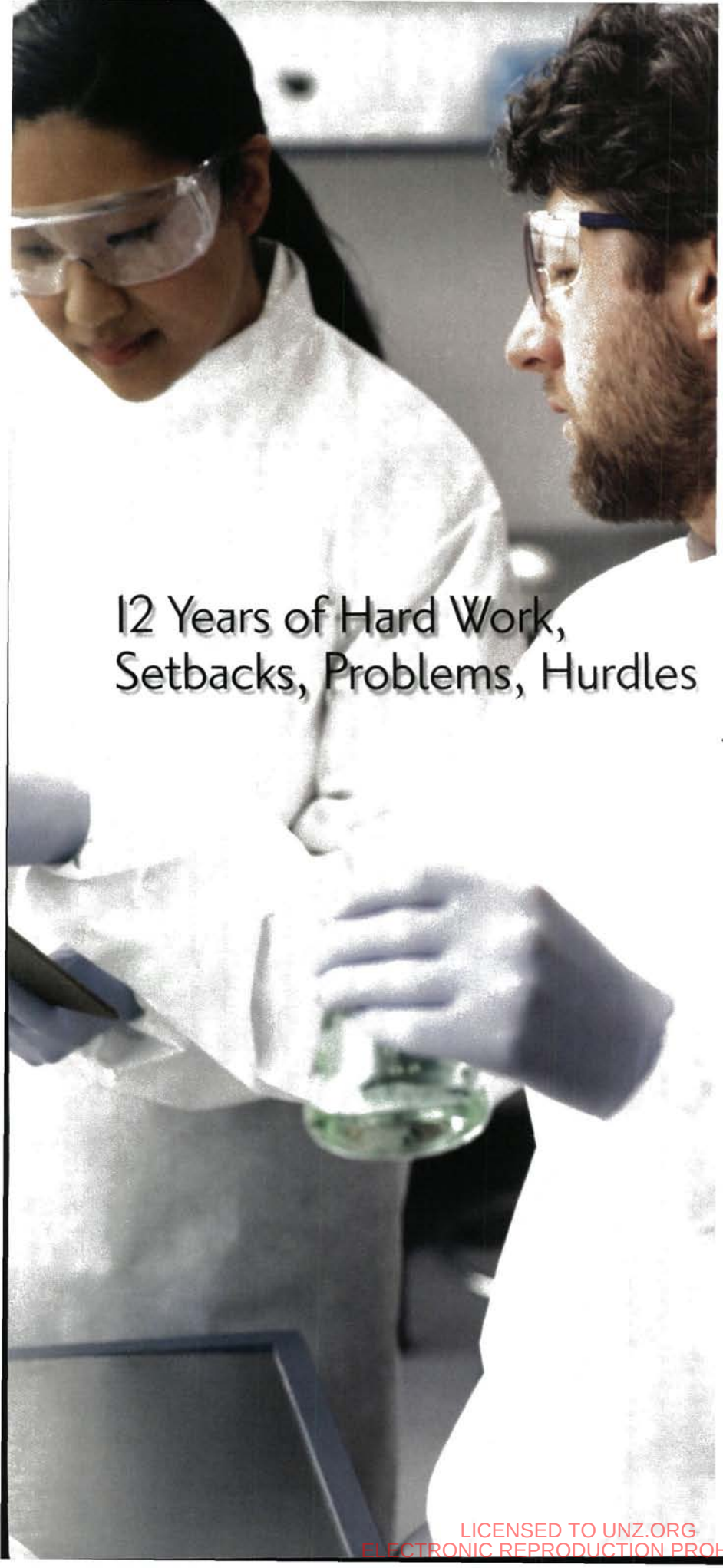

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the weekly Standard

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Pay Any Price, Bear Any Burden, Tell Any Fib

He's done it twice now, first in a formal talk at New York University on Sept. 20, and then again during his debate with President Bush on Oct. 1: John Kerry has (kinda, sorta) likened himself to John F. Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis—if only to make plain, by contrast, what a miserable cock-up George W. Bush's Iraq adventure has been. Ah, for that glorious Camelot autumn back in 1962. It used to be, Kerry reminds us, that American presidents consulted our European allies *before* we decided to drop our bombs. Why, it even used to be that we were trusted to behave this way by the French. Thus, Cold War History 101, Professor Kerry (at NYU):

> In the dark days of the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy sent former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Europe to build support. Acheson explained the situation to French President de Gaulle. Then he offered to show him highly classified satellite photos as proof. De Gaulle waved him away, saying, "The word of the President of the United States is good enough for me." How many world leaders have that same trust in America's president today?

Politically devastating historical analogy—or totally bogus fabrication? You be the judge.

Item the first: It's not true that Charles de Gaulle decided to forgo any personal inspection of Acheson's evidence for the existence of a Cuban-based Soviet military threat against the continental United States. THE SCRAPBOOK refers you to a contemporary, eyewitness account of the meeting by legendary CIA official Sherman Kent—the man who actually carried the relevant satellite photos into the French president's private office on October 22, 1962. First Kent showed de Gaulle a large photocomposite map of Cuba, and "still standing," the latter man "bent over it as I began to talk about the defensive phase." De Gaulle remained standing, still bent over, while Kent then proceeded to show him many, many similar such photos. So interested was Monsieur le président in Kent's material that at one point he picked up a reading glass in order to see the details more clearly.

Item the second: More basically, it's not even true that this October 22, 1962, episode reflected a serious effort by the Kennedy administration to "consult" its European allies in the first place. According to Jean Lacouture's standard two-volume biography of de Gaulle, the very first thing the French president said to Dean Acheson was this: "I understand that you have not come to consult me, but to inform me." And the only thing Acheson offered de Gaulle by way of reply was this: "That is correct."

And did Charles de Gaulle then go ape, à la Jacques Chirac? He did not.

Item the third: Judging from the confidential telegram America's chargé in Paris sent home to the State Department a few hours after the Acheson meeting broke up, the president of France was worried only that Kennedy and Co. might be *too assiduously* cultivating European and world opinion. "With respect to proposed action in Security Council," Cecil Lyon advised his superiors in Washington, "President de Gaulle remarked that he realized that this was in line with our policy." But "personally he did not think it would be practical. There might be much talk, but he doubted whether Security Council would be effective."

Charles de Gaulle knew John F. Kennedy. John F. Kennedy was a friend of his. Senator Kerry, you're no John Kennedy. ♦

La Trahison des Jerks

Quick: What's the most famous "dumb intellectual" political anecdote of all time? That would have to be the remark attributed to former *New Yorker* movie critic Pauline Kael, who's supposed to have expressed her incredulity about the results of the 1972 presidential election as follows: "I don't know how Richard Nixon could have won. I don't know a single person who voted for him."

But wait: Comes now a hard-hitting investigative report from our friends at the online magazine *Slate*, wherein it is revealed that the golden dunce cap has finally been wrested from the late Ms. Kael's grasp. Novelist Joyce Carol Oates now owns the booby prize for self-involved cluelessness about the culture of American public life. Which is saying a lot. The competition was very stiff indeed.

According to the October 11 posting on its site, *Slate* asked a "variety of prominent American novelists" for a "frank response to the following question: Which presidential candidate are you voting for, and why?" Oddly enough, George W. Bush did not win this contest. Twenty-four of thirty-one novelists surveyed preferred John Kerry, while only four liked Bush (three others gave some form of "neither" as their answer). And from the pro-Kerry contingent came, as we say, a goodly number of impressively stupid explanations. Somebody named Dan Chaon said he didn't like President Bush's, well, religion: "I find myself particularly repelled by Bush's professed 'Christianity,' even as his administration repudiates every value that Christ represents"—Christ, you recall being, among other things, a notoriously fierce proponent of the estate tax. Bush is "probably not the Antichrist,"

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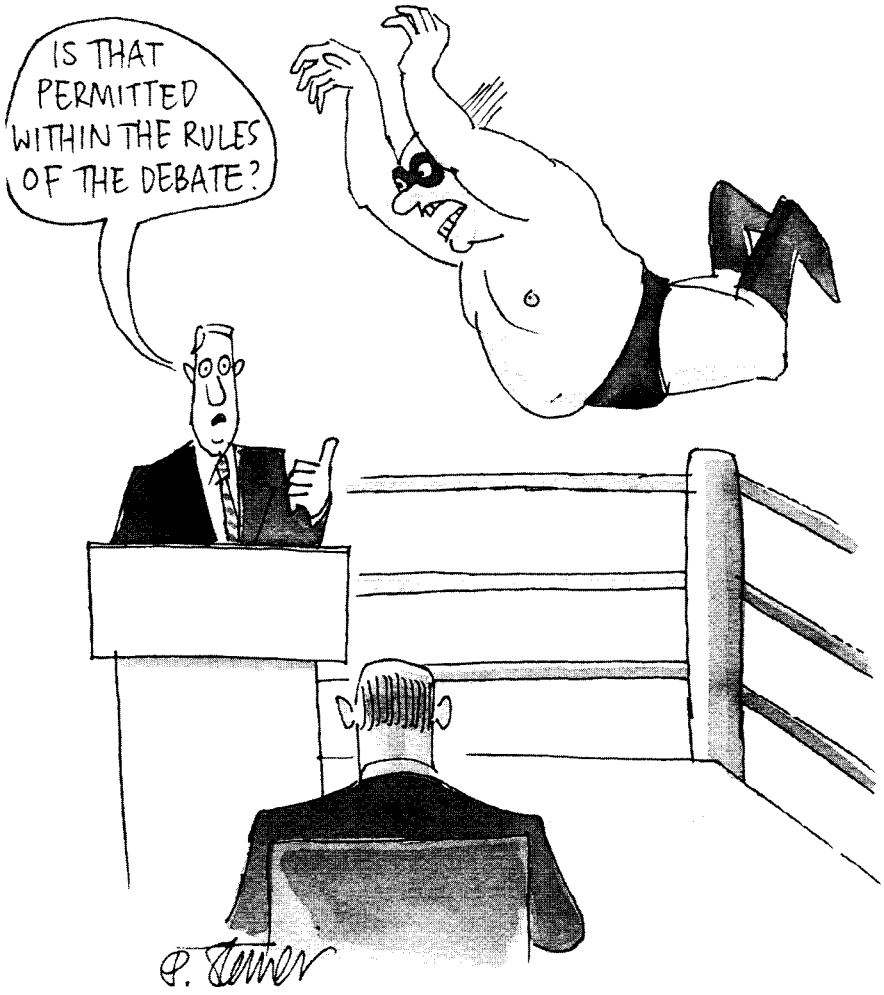

Chaon allowed, "but he comes as close as I've seen in my lifetime."

Jonathan Franzen will be casting a November vote for Kerry ("of course") because, among other things, "his wife is hot hot hot." Mr. Franzen, you'll recall, is the man who wouldn't do a guest spot on *Oprah* because, well, Franzen is an *artiste* and *Oprah*'s much too vulgar.

Then there's David Amsden, who'll vote against Bush because he has a cousin who recently did a tour of Army duty in Iraq only to come home with recurring nightmares. "His stories were crushing," Amsden reports. "Did you know that there are giant spiders that creep up on sleeping soldiers at night?" For that matter, did you know—as Kerry-voter-to-be Nicole Krauss points out—that if Bush is reelected, "It may be the end of life as we know it." Hard to top that for dumbness, isn't it?

But damned if Joyce Carol Oates hasn't gone ahead and done it. "Like virtually everyone I know, I'm voting for Kerry," she tells *Slate*. Amazing, no? The poor woman's so totally out of it about politics, she doesn't even know Rule Number One: Whatever else you do, for God's sake *make sure you don't sound like Pauline Kael.* ♦

Dept. of Glass Houses

THE SCRAPBOOK notes that Democratic second-lady nominee Elizabeth Edwards thinks it's "really sad" how Lynne Cheney got mad at John Kerry for having presumed to speculate aloud, on national television, about the lesbianism of Mrs. Cheney's daughter, Mary. Geez, why on earth would any mother be upset about *that*, Mrs. Edwards wonders? Unless, of course, Lynne Cheney's the kind of mom who —*pssst*—doesn't love her child the way she ought to. "I think that it indicates a certain degree of shame with respect to her daughter's sexual preferences," Mrs. Edwards concludes.

Shame is a particular expertise of Mrs. Edwards, it appears. We therefore eagerly await her commentary on certain other prominent political figures who get a little squeamish when it comes to homosexuality. Her own husband, for example, who two weeks ago volunteered on national TV that he thinks it's a "wonderful thing" that the Cheneys "have a gay daughter" and somehow still "embrace her." Or how about New Mexico governor and Kerry surrogate Bill Richardson, who thinks it was okay for the senator to drag Mary Cheney into the presidential debate because it's already a "very known" fact that "Vice President Cheney has a daughter who" . . . um, er, um . . . "feels a certain way."

Come to think of it, Mrs. Edwards, how about this little item, involving Kerry himself, from back in May: "Kerry's apparent discomfort with the issue showed at a news conference yesterday. . . . Asked by a reporter what he would say 'on a personal level' to same-sex couples married in his state, Kerry said: 'It's not my job to start parceling advice on something personal like that.'" So tell us, Mrs. Edwards: What was *that* about? And how come now it all of a sudden *is* John Kerry's job to comment on other people's personal lives? ♦

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Casual

Midnight's Children

I never feared strange noises in the night until a few months ago. But now I lie in bed in the dark, trying to sleep, and I can't, because of my dread. The room is silent, but that silence is notable because I am certain it will soon be shattered.

And yes, soon enough, it begins—something that sounds a little like a muffled boom, followed by another noise resembling the "ping" of a submarine's radar.

"Is that—" I ask my wife.

"Yes," she says.

"Should we—"

"No, wait," she says.

Another muffled boom. Another ping.

We're both halfway upright now, tense, not sure what to do.

Then comes a new sound: "Bwoooooaaahhh . . ."

And now we know. We know it's happened.

The baby is astir. Not awake. But astir.

It's the middle of the night, and in her room down the hall from ours, our daughter is unsettled. The muffled boom we hear is the sound her legs make when she lets them go after she's pulled them to her chest. The ping is just the baby vocalizing. The "Bwoooooaaaah" is the baby being incredibly cute.

The thing is, we would never hear these noises were it not for the small machine that sits on our windowsill. They call it a "baby monitor," because it's a one-way transmitter that lets us hear what's going on in our daughter's room. But it really should be called a Parental Torture Instrument.

"I'll go," I say.

"No, I'll go," my wife says.

"No, let me."

"Put the pacifier in," she says.

"Yeah, I know."

"And," my wife says, "bring her to me if she's hungry."

So I rise, grab my glasses, wind myself in a robe, and shuffle toward the baby's room. As I approach, I note that I can barely hear her. But on the baby monitor, she is as loud as Ethel Merman.

For you see, what the monitor does is this: It amplifies the sounds the baby makes, so that her noises

come across louder and more distinctly than they would if we were two or three feet away from her crib. According to his biographer Gary Giddins, Bing Crosby became the first great pop recording star because he was the first singer to learn how to use the microphone. When it comes to grabbing our attention at 2:30 in the morning, our sleeping daughter is the Bing Crosby of the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

I have, gingerly, suggested to my wife that we might consider turning the volume down on the monitor so that we hear only the really loud wails, the strong screams that would indicate genuine need.

This suggestion was, to put it mildly, dismissed with extreme prejudice.

The monitor sits on a table next to the baby's crib. As I stand over it, I can see my baby. She is asleep, but restless. She's whimpering, but there are no tears. This must be a nightmare. But what on earth can she be having a nightmare about? What negative life material could she be using? In her four months on this earth, she has suffered a bit from gas pain and has had a few shots. Other than that, her life has been pretty peachy, and she smiles through the day unless she's hungry or exhausted.

I remember my sister once saying she would wake her first child up whenever she thought he was having a nightmare because she didn't want him to have bad dreams. I thought she was nuts at the time, but now I understand. It's heart-wrenching to watch a four-month-old look as though she's miserable.

She kicks up her legs again and bangs them down on the mattress. Since we now lay babies to sleep on their backs, they don't have much ability to comfort themselves with their own bodies. I realize with rue that she is trying, unsuccessfully, to get herself into the fetal position—that she wants to curl up but can't.

I can sympathize. The baby monitor's megaphone-like intrusion into my bedroom means that these days sleep isn't what Shakespeare called tired nature's sweet restorer. My raveled sleeve of care isn't getting knitted up the way it used to. I understand that infants disturb your sleep, but does the disturbance have to come via broadcast?

I keep putting the pacifier in my daughter's mouth, saying shhhh and rubbing her tummy. She pings and mews and scrunches up her face and whimpers. She spits out the pacifier. She opens her mouth wide and wails.

My wife appears in the doorway. "She's hungry," I say.

"I know," she says.

Alas, the baby monitor has won. I am defeated. The baby needed us. We responded. It worked. My indignation lessens. And then, I get to go back to bed while my wife stays up with the baby. It isn't fair, I know. But then, life isn't fair.

John Podhoretz

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Quagmire Redux?

David Gelernter has missed the point of the Vietnam lesson ("Another Vietnam?" Oct. 11). It's obvious the American press wrote many defeatist articles about the war. However, such coverage flowed inevitably from the poor leadership provided by Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

The overwhelming lesson of Vietnam is that when Washington politicians devise war strategies and choose bombing targets, we will lose. When politicians decree there will be a DMZ beyond which our troops may not go, we will lose. When we rotate troops in and out of the war in a year, and when we don't call out the Guard and Army reserves, we will lose.

The media certainly played a role in our Vietnam defeat. But Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, and Richard Nixon played an even greater role. And Bush is playing the same role in Iraq. The failure to invade and pulverize Falluja is clear evidence the Iraq war is being fought along political terms, not military ones.

It is a sad day in America, because this war was winnable. Now it is not. Even worse, it is clear that a large number of Americans are so cowardly that they are ready to elect John Kerry and run out of Iraq at the first chance.

Dudley Crawford
Missouri City, TX

I take David Gelernter's article to heart. He makes some very valid points. There are some striking similarities between Iraq and Vietnam. For example, many on the right who support the Iraq war are unwilling to send their sons and grandsons to fight in Iraq. This is just like Vietnam.

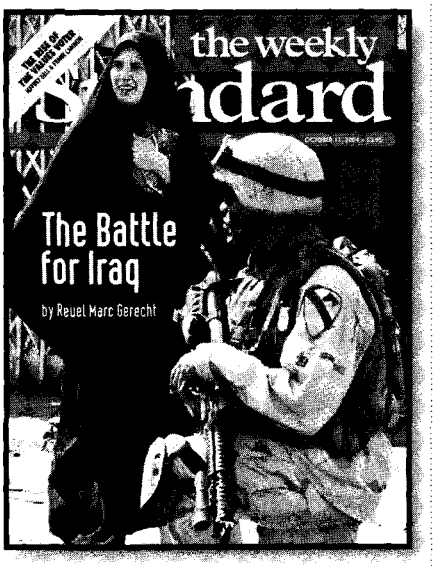
As young men, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Dan Quayle, Rush Limbaugh, and many others supported the Vietnam war, but did not volunteer to serve. Many who did serve—including John McCain, Max Cleland, Chuck Robb, and John Kerry—have had their patriotism and military service called into question by some of the aforementioned individuals.

Before we, as a country, decide to take many of the Iraqi cities currently held by insurgents, militants, or terrorists, let's see the sons and grandsons of prominent conservatives join the battle.

Jeff Clark
Germantown, MD

David Gelernter's editorial makes what is by now a classic mistake in reasoning. The fact that the Communist Vietnamese government has been a disaster has some bearing on whether the war should have been fought, but little relevance to whether it was winnable. People closely associated with that war, including Robert McNamara, believe it could not be won. In Vietnam, America lost the hearts-and-minds campaign, and soon thereafter lost the war.

The fallacy here is thinking we are popular simply because a local government is unpopular. We have seen this in spades in Iraq. The truth is people can, and do, despise both Saddam Hussein and the United States. Since Saddam is no longer a factor, we will now have a much tougher hearts-and-minds battle in Iraq. The key question is whether we are winning that fight. It seems to me that we are well on our way to losing it.



Samuel L. Earp
McLean, VA

Debating Kerry

In "Debate Hangover" (Oct. 11), Fred Barnes makes repeated reference to John Kerry's "contradictions" on Iraq. But that's only a fair critique if one assumes an honest politician must have been consistently pro- (or anti-) war from the very beginning to the present.

That assumption doesn't hold up. It's possible for a person to have opposed the invasion of Iraq, but then—after the invasion—supported the U.S. and allied reconstruction effort. There is no "contradiction" there, only a reevaluation in view of the situation on the ground as it has evolved.

To be sure, John Kerry won't get my vote. But that's because he's a liberal Democrat, not because he has revised his opinion on Iraq based on unfolding events, events over which he has no control.

George G. Peery III
New Bern, NC

Fred Barnes is right when he argues that what John Kerry says in a debate is more important than how he says it. Indeed, what Kerry says may come back to haunt him later, such as his remark about our foreign policy needing to pass a "global test."

Perhaps we should ask Kerry if it is also an interstellar test. In attempting to explain his debate remark later on CNN, Kerry said, "I can do a better job of protecting America's security because the test that I was talking about was a test of legitimacy, not just in the globe, but elsewhere."

Not just in the globe? Does he mean in addition to the United Nations we also need the approval of the United Federation of Planets before defending America? And Dubya is supposed to be the inarticulate one?

Daniel John Sobieski
Chicago, IL

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"Fair Game"

"We're all God's children, Bob. And I think if you were to talk to Dick Cheney's daughter, who is a lesbian, she would tell you that she's being who she was, she's being who she was born as."

John Kerry, responding to Bob Schieffer's question, "Do you believe homosexuality is a choice?" in the third debate, October 13, 2004

"I said it in a very respectful way about their love of their daughter. . . . I was saying it in a way that embraced the love of their daughter. . . . All I was trying to do is point out that it—let their daughter speak. Was it a choice, or was she born the way she was? That was the question. I was being respectful, purely respectful."

John Kerry, quoted in the Des Moines Register, *October 15, 2004*

Was John Kerry born a shameless opportunist, or did he choose to become one? In a way, who cares? Who knows how John Kerry became who he is? What is clear is that he is, as Dick Cheney put it, "a man who will do and say anything to get elected." And what is equally clear is that he shouldn't be elected president of the United States.

Leave aside the cheap, cold, calculating cynicism—and cruelty—in Kerry's appropriation of the alleged opinions of an opposing candidate's family member to try to embarrass his opponent. Leave aside the view Kerry and his campaign must have of millions of religious Americans if they think this particular McCarthyite moment will work. Leave aside their fear of having an honest debate about a legitimate public policy issue—same-sex marriage, the role of liberal judges in advancing it, and the proper response of the elected representatives of the American people. Leave aside the fact that Kerry's alleged opposition to same-sex marriage is manifestly dishonest and cowardly.

Leave it all aside. How stupid does John Kerry think the American people are?

Does he really think they will believe that he singled out Mary Cheney because he "was trying to say something positive about the way strong families deal with this issue"? Does he think they will accept his claim that he was saying something about the Cheneys' "love of their daughter"? Of course he wasn't. In his answer, he never mentioned or came close to mentioning the Cheney family, or the Cheneys' love. He merely brought up Mary Cheney as a lesbian, out of left field, in order to get her name and sexual orientation into an answer where no such citation was expected, called for, or remotely appropriate. His campaign manager let slip the truth when after the debate she told Fox News that Mary Cheney was "fair game."

Kerry's desperate attempt at next-day spin was also revealing. It showed the way he had been supposed to bring up Mary Cheney—the way he and his staff had planned to pull off this maneuver. Kerry was supposed to do what his more skilled and clever debating partner, John Edwards, did. He was supposed to sugarcoat his use of Mary Cheney more effectively. Edwards prefaced his answer to Gwen Ifill's same-sex marriage question in the vice-presidential debate with, "Let me say first that I think the vice president and his wife love their daughter. I think they love her very much. And you can't have anything but respect for the fact that they're willing to talk about the fact that they have a gay daughter; the fact that they embrace her is a wonderful thing."

But Kerry forgot his lines. And while Cheney had to pretend to accept Edwards's phony, condescending compliment, and everyone else allowed Edwards's deftly exploitative comment go by, Kerry's appropriation of Mary Cheney came in no such lawyerly and sugary packaging. The rawness of his ruthlessness was there for all to see. The Democrats are terrified of a debate on same-sex marriage, and used Mary Cheney to try to brush back the Bush-Cheney ticket from forcing a real policy debate.

No one would blame President Bush for hesitating to engage in such a full-bore debate, partly because he undoubtedly wants to avoid further awkwardness for his running mate and his family. But the rest of the country doesn't have to be intimidated by John Kerry's McCarthyism. They should punish him for it—and also remember that when they vote on November 2, they are choosing between two candidates who have very different social, moral, and cultural outlooks.

They should remember that Bush and Kerry will make very different judicial appointments, just as they took opposite stands on the Defense of Marriage Act, the federal law that sought to protect states from being forced to recognize other states' same-sex marriages, and on a constitutional amendment. This is a legitimate ground for choice—as is the character revealed by a candidate who did what John Kerry did, with malice aforethought, Wednesday night.

—*William Kristol*

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Florida's Terror Referendum

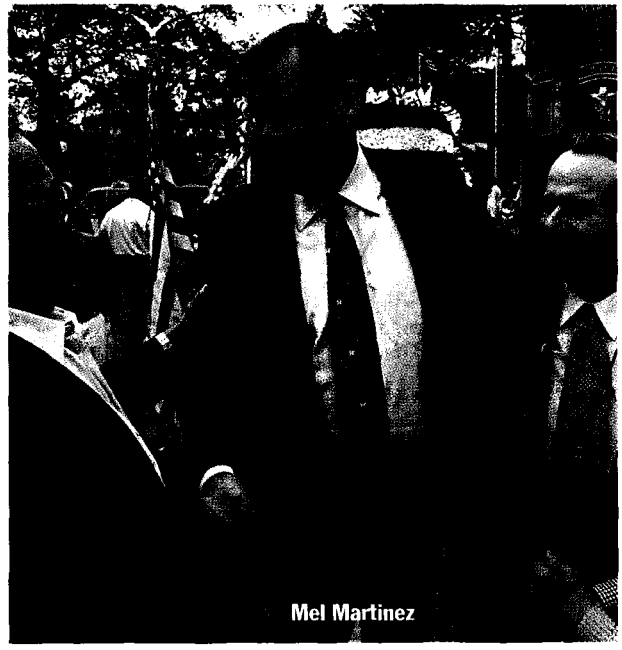
In the Senate race, it's Martinez and Castor versus Sami Al-Arian. BY FRED BARNES

Tampa

THE BIGGEST NAME in the Florida Senate race is Sami Al-Arian, and he's in jail. Al-Arian is a former professor at the University of South Florida awaiting trial on charges of terrorist activities as head of the American branch of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a terrorist organization that promotes suicide bombings in Israel. Around him swirls the issue of who would deal more effectively with terrorism, Republican Mel Martinez or Democrat Betty Castor. "The race," says Martinez consultant Stuart Stevens, "has become a referendum on the war on terrorism."

Nearly every other issue, including the traditional ones in Florida elections like health care and taxes, have faded. Or, more precisely, they never had a chance to emerge. Instead, the race pivots on whether Castor, during her tenure as USF president, took strong enough action against Al-Arian after his support for terrorism became known in the mid-1990s. Castor suspended him with pay for two years and cooperated with FBI investigators. But she rehired Al-Arian, a tenured professor of engineering, when the investigation initially produced no indictment. Her successor as USF president, Judy Genshaft, had fewer qualms, firing Al-Arian in 2001. He was indicted two years later.

Martinez, of course, claims Castor all but coddled Al-Arian and three associates, two of whom were also indicted while a third departed for Syria to run Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The same accusation was thrown at Castor during the Democratic primary by her chief rival, congressman Peter Deutsch. But she easily disposed of him and Miami mayor Alex Penelas to win the nomination. Martinez, meanwhile, topped former Congressman Bill McCollum in a brutal Republican primary in which he attacked McCollum as "the new darling of homosexual extremists" for backing hate-crimes legislation. McCollum was outraged, but he has endorsed Martinez.



Mel Martinez

AP / Wilfredo Lee

The race here has national significance. If Democrats are to have any chance of capturing the Senate, they must win in Florida. The seat is being vacated by Democrat Bob Graham. A Castor victory would offset one of the expected losses of Democratic seats in South Carolina, where Fritz Hollings is retiring, and Georgia, whose senior senator Zell Miller is not seeking reelection. Republicans now control the Senate 51-49.

The Al-Arian case first received notice in 1994 and 1995 when a TV documentary and stories in the *Tampa Tribune* revealed his ties to Palestinian suicide bombers and his advocacy of "death to Israel." It was at roughly the same time that Al-Arian's USF colleague fled to Syria. The university defended its relationship with the departed professor as an effort at diversity, but Castor later said the disclosures about him and Al-Arian were "very disturbing." She maintained it wasn't USF's job to investigate Al-Arian or others, and in a primary debate last June insisted the FBI never gave her "one iota" of information that would have warranted firing Al-Arian. She stepped down as college president in 1999.

The issue seemed to collapse after Deutsch raised it in a TV commercial only to lose the primary by a landslide. His ad consisted of a dark screen with two voices suggesting Republicans would exploit the Al-Arian matter if Castor were the nominee. One voice says: "Betty Castor didn't speak out about terrorist professor Sami Al-Arian when she was USF president." The other voice replies, "Shhhhh," as if Republicans might hear. "Al-Arian was calling the '93 World Trade Center bombers," says the first voice. "Shhhhh" is the reply again. Finally, the first voice says, "Can we talk about finding a candidate who can win?"

Oddly, it was Castor who raised the issue in the fall campaign in a TV spot, surprising Martinez and his

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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advisers. They were hoping to use the Al-Arian case against Castor, but hadn't figured out how to broach it. They feared a sharp attack on a female opponent might backfire. But when Castor's TV ad appeared, they saw it as a gift, freeing them to respond with their own ad.

Castor's aim was inoculation. If the ad worked, she'd be able to turn to other issues. "Every candidate talks about terrorism, but I've dealt with it firsthand," she declares in the ad. "As university president, I took action to remove a suspected terrorist from our campus. . . . To me, fighting terrorism isn't just policy, it's personal." Martinez fired back with an ad featuring a former federal investigator, Bill West. "Betty Castor's lack of strong leadership allowed a dangerous situation to get worse," West says. "Stopping terrorists takes aggressive action and Betty Castor did not deliver."

Castor didn't back off. Her next ad faulted Martinez, who was President Bush's campaign co-chairman in Florida in 2000, for allowing Al-Arian to campaign with Bush. Actually, Al-Arian was only pictured with Bush at a rally (he later was invited to the White House). Now Martinez is running a talking-head ad with Rudy Giuliani saying: "There's no greater issue today facing the American people than winning the war on terror. Mel Martinez is the clear choice." The ad is extremely effective.

And so it goes. Castor would like to stress conventional domestic issues, but there may not be time. The primary was late, August 31, and during September the Senate campaign was blotted out by the hurricanes. Now the campaign enters the home stretch with two televised debates scheduled. The prospects are not good for any issue beyond terrorism to gain traction before the election. Besides, Martinez is quite comfortable with the focus remaining on terrorism, because he assumes it helps him and hurts Castor. He's probably right.

Martinez needs all the help he can get against Castor. She is the best can-

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~ Osama Bin Laden, February 14, 2003.

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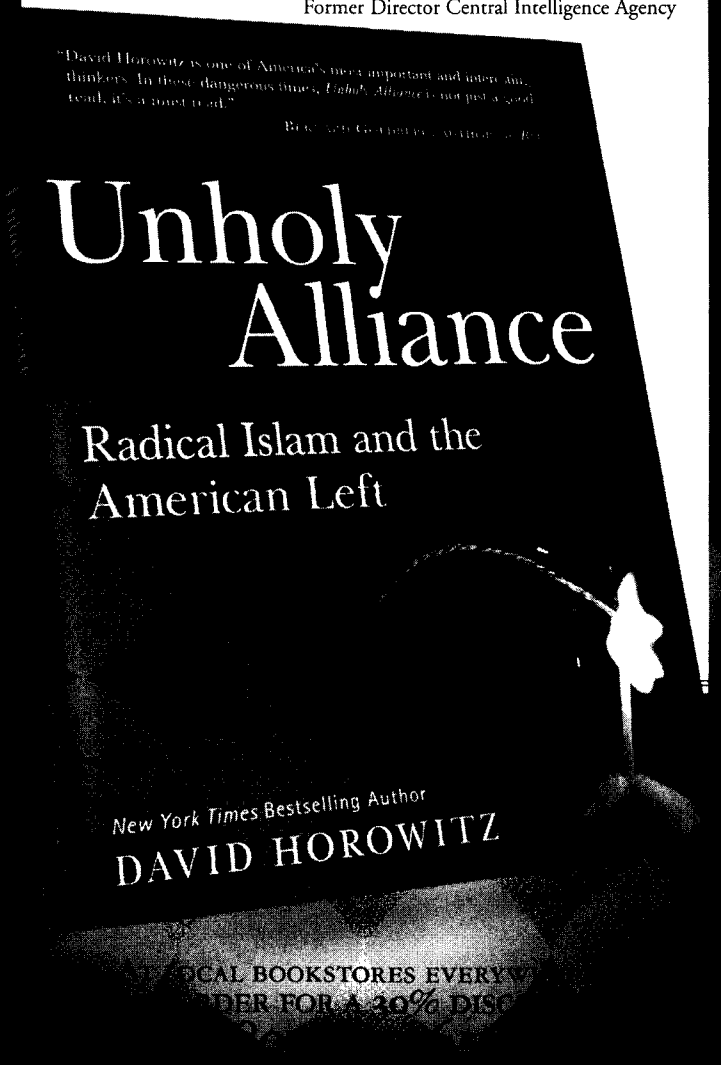
Former Director Central Intelligence Agency



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didate Democrats could have fielded. Clay Phillips, Castor's political director, says Florida is "a name ID state" where voters don't know candidates well. So name ID matters, and hers is high. Castor, 63, also has a political base in the I-4 corridor across central Florida from Daytona Beach to St. Petersburg. This is where statewide races are usually decided. And her moderate-to-liberal views position her in the mainstream.

Martinez, 57, is no slouch as a candidate. He had intended to skip the race, he says, until Graham decided not to seek reelection. Graham would have been difficult to beat, but an open seat is winnable. And the Bush White House was eager for him to give up his post as secretary of housing and urban development and run. Why? He not only gives Republicans a better-than-even shot at picking up a Democratic seat, but he's likely to attract a large Hispanic vote that may spill over and go for Bush.

Even without the terrorism issue, Martinez has remarkable political strengths: name ID, Hispanic ethnicity, central Florida home, great personal story, likable personality, big time connections. Martinez arrived in Florida in 1962 from Cuba as a 15-year-old with no family. He didn't speak English. The Catholic Church found him a foster home in Orlando. Four years later, his parents escaped from Cuba and joined him. He went to Florida State University, worked his way through law school, and taught himself to speak English without a Latino accent. "Sometimes people even think that I have a southern accent," he says.

Politics has been kind to Martinez, who was Orange County (Orlando) chairman before going to Washington. As rough and nasty as the Senate primary was, he came out of it with a reasonably united Republican party behind him. And he's blessed with a short general election campaign dominated by an issue, terrorism, that aids him. True, he doesn't have a lock on winning, but you've got to like his chances more than Castor's. ♦

La Grippe of the Trial Lawyers

Guess who's to blame for the flu vaccine fiasco.

BY WILLIAM TUCKER

JOHN KERRY wasted no time jumping on President George Bush about the unexpected shortage in flu vaccines this year. Why wasn't Bush paying attention? He should have done things differently. And of course Kerry had a "plan" to solve the whole mess.

If Kerry thinks he can solve the flu vaccine problem, he need look no further than his own running mate, trial lawyer John Edwards. Vaccines are the one area of medicine where trial lawyers are almost completely responsible for the problem. No one can plausibly point a finger at insurance companies, drug companies, or doctors. Lawyers have won the vaccine game so completely that nobody wants to play.

Two weeks ago, British regulators suspended the license of Chiron Corp., the world's second-leading flu vaccine supplier, for three months. Officials cited manufacturing problems at the factory in Liverpool, England, where Chiron makes its leading product, Fluvirin. Chiron was scheduled to supply 46 million of the 100 million doses to be administered in the United States this year. The other 54 million will come from Aventis Pasteur, a French company with headquarters in Strasbourg.

So why is it that 100 percent of our flu vaccines are now made by two companies in Europe? The answer is simple. Trial lawyers drove the American manufacturers out of the business.

In 1967 there were 26 companies making vaccines in the United States. Today there are only four that make any type of vaccine and none making flu vaccine. Wyeth was the last to fall, dropping flu shots after 2002. For recently emerging illnesses such as Lyme disease, there is no commercial vaccine, even though one has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

All this is the result of a legal concept called "liability without fault" that emerged from the hothouse atmosphere of the law schools in the 1960s and became the law of the land. Under the old "negligence" regime, you had to prove a product manufacturer had done something wrong in order to hold it liable for damages. Under liability without fault, on the other hand, the manufacturer can be held responsible for harm from its products, whether blameworthy or not. Add to that the jackpot awards that come from pain-and-suffering and punitive damages, and you have a legal climate that no manufacturer wants to risk.

In theory, prices might have been jacked up enough to make vaccine production profitable even with the lawsuit risk, but federal intervention made vaccines a low-margin business. Before 1993, manufacturers sold vaccines to doctors, doctors prescribed them to patients, and there was some markup. Then Congress adopted the Vaccine for Children Act, which made the government a monopsony buyer. The feds now purchase over half of all vaccines at a low fixed price and distribute them to doctors. This has essentially finished off the private market.

As recently as 1980, 18 American

William Tucker is a fellow at the Discovery Institute. His book on trial lawyers, Civil Lynchings, *will be published next year.*

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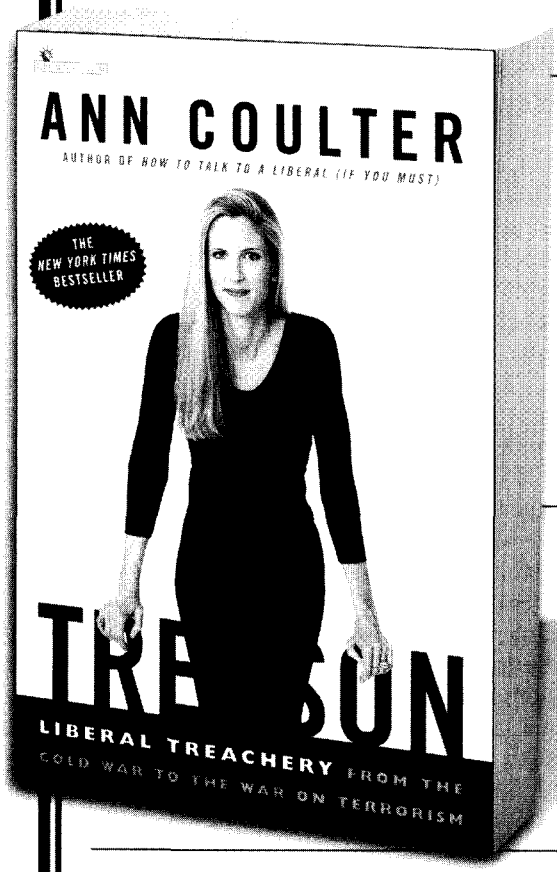
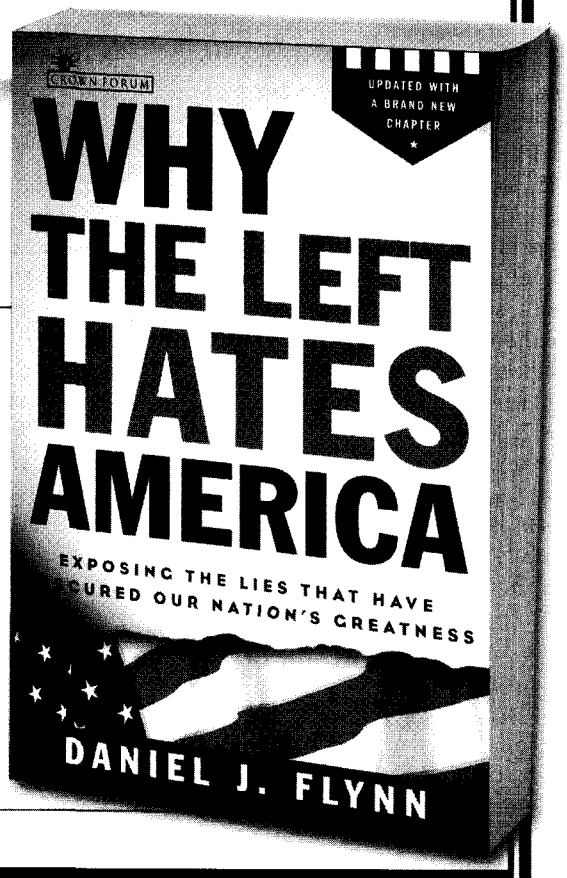


TREASON

Nationally syndicated columnist and constitutional attorney Ann Coulter looks at over a half-century of American history—from McCarthyism to Clinton, from the Cold War to the war on terrorism—to reveal exactly where liberals stand, and show why they want to undermine America.

"She can zing one-liners faster than Zeus can throw lightning bolts." —***Kansas City Star***



WHY THE LEFT HATES AMERICA

"Flynn demolishes the underpinnings of the knee-jerk anti-American bias." —John McWhorter, author of *Losing the Race*

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companies made eight different vaccines for various childhood diseases. Today, four companies—GlaxoSmithKline, Aventis, Merck, and Wyeth—make 12 vaccines. Of the 12, seven are made by only one company and only one is made by more than two. "There are constant shortages," says Dr. Paul Offit, head of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "With only one supplier for so many vaccines, the whole system is fragile. When even the smallest thing goes wrong, children miss their vaccinations."

The intersection between mass vaccinations and the tort system was bound to be messy. When you vaccinate enough people, someone, somewhere, is going to have a bad reaction. You could give a glass of milk to 100 million people and a few would inevitably get violently sick from it. With vaccines, there will be allergic reactions and a tiny but predictable percentage of people will suffer some kind of permanent damage or even die. Because of liability without fault and the generosity of the tort system, the result is huge damage awards.

The first instance of this came in 1955 with polio vaccinations. Cutter Laboratories, the California company that now distributes Cutter's Insect Repellent, made an early batch of vaccines, some of which had live viruses in them. Almost all the children in Idaho were administered the vaccine and several dozen contracted polio. In 1957, the parents of Anne Gottsdanker, an 8-year-old girl whose legs had become paralyzed, sued Cutter, with famed personal injury lawyer Melvin Belli representing them.

The jury found Cutter's actions were not negligent—the orders had been rushed, standards had not been clear, and safety precautions were still rudimentary at the time. But, using the new doctrine of liability without fault, the jury held Cutter accountable anyway and awarded $147,300. "That decision made Ralph Nader possible," Belli later claimed.

"It was a turning point," says Dr. Offit, whose book *The Cutter Incident* will be published next year. "Because of the Cutter decision, vaccines became one of the first medical products to be eliminated by lawsuits."

That this would be the outcome wasn't immediately clear. Soon after the trial, the *Yale Law Journal* published an article arguing that insurance against adverse reactions was the solution. The public wouldn't buy policies because it would be too complicated and expensive, but vaccine makers could. Insurance would cover the cost of bad outcomes and the manufacturers would pass these costs on to their customers. Those few who were harmed by a vaccine would be covered by those who benefited. Everything would work out. Unfortunately, this thesis failed to anticipate how high damage awards would go.

When an unusual epidemic occurred at Fort Dix, N.J., in 1976, for example, the federal government decided to vaccinate the whole country against the new "swine flu." To the astonishment of Congress, the insurance companies refused to participate. Senator Ted Kennedy charged "cupidity" and "lack of social obligation." The Congressional Budget Office predicted that with 45 million Americans inoculated, there would be 4,500 injury claims and 90 damage awards, totaling $2 million. Congress decided to provide the insurance.

As Peter Huber recounts in his book *Liability*, the CBO's first estimate proved uncannily accurate. A total of 4,169 damage claims were filed. However, not 90 but more than 700 suits were successful and the total bill to Congress came to over $100 million, 50 times what the CBO had predicted. The insurance companies knew their business well.

Adding to the problem are the predictable panics about vaccines that spread among parents and are abetted by trial lawyers. In 1974, a British researcher published a paper claiming that the vaccine for pertussis (whooping cough) had caused seizures in 36 children, leading to 22 cases of epilepsy or mental retardation. Subsequent studies proved the claim to be false, but in the meantime Japan canceled inoculations, resulting in 113 preventable whooping cough deaths. In the United States, 800 pertussis vaccine lawsuits asking $21 million in damages were filed over the next decade. The cost of a vaccination went from 21 cents to $11.

Every American drug company dropped pertussis vaccine except Lederle Laboratories. In 1980, Lederle lost a liability suit for the paralysis of a three-month-old infant—even though there was almost no evidence implicating the vaccine. Lederle's damages were $1.1 million, more than half its gross revenues from sale of the vaccine for that entire year.

In recent years, the most prevalent anti-vaccine rumor has held that Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative used in vaccines from the 1930s until just recently, is behind an "epidemic of autism." Once again, scientific studies have disproved the allegation, but hundreds of parents are filing suit, and trial lawyers continue to troll for clients.

Congress tried to stave off liability problems with the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act in 1986. The program functions almost as an ideal "medical court," with panels of scientists, virologists, and statisticians reviewing each complaint and rewarding those that seem legitimate. Unfortunately, the program allows plaintiffs to opt out of the system. Trial lawyers continually bypass it and elect to go to trial—particularly for cases where the review looks unpromising. With Thimerosal, lawyers have argued that the law does not apply because mercury was an additive, not the actual vaccine. The result is jackpot awards and very little protection for the vaccine companies. In 1998, the FDA approved a vaccine for Lyme disease, which strikes 15,000 people a year. GlaxoSmithKline manufactured it for three years but quit when rumors began circulating that the vaccine caused arthritis.

All this has made the flu an

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Public races to get dollars by deadline

The rush to get them at Face Value may predict our next president

By Laura Fisher
Universal Media Syndicate

Citizens across the nation are jamming National Hot Line phones in an effort to get the new Campaign Dollars for their favorite candidate.

So far, George W. Bush is ahead in the first round of a very tight race to get the special Dollar Bills.

And right now, they are the hottest items around.

They are the 2004 Presidential Campaign Dollar Bills, featuring candidates George W. Bush and John F. Kerry. And everyone is trying to get their hands on one.

The highly collectible 2004 Campaign Dollars are made with genuine U.S. legal tender Bills. A detailed custom portrait of the candidate is applied by the Monetary Exchange to create this campaign collectible. "So, anyone who spends these special historic treasures would be foolish," explains John T. White, Executive Director of the U.S. Monetary Exchange. "The potential historic value of these collector's items could be so much more."

FIRST TABULATION

RESULTS OF THE FIRST PUBLIC RELEASE:

✓**BUSH 53.1%**
KERRY 46.9%

At first, it looked like those who missed the first Public Offering would be left out. That's because all the Bills in the U. S. Monetary Exchange's first release sold out almost immediately.

But, it has been confirmed that a controlled second release is being issued to the general public, and we will tell you how you can get yours.

The hard to find Bills could be difficult to come by. Dealers may try to grab them up on speculation that they could produce a huge windfall for their children or grandchildren. No one knows exactly what they will be worth someday because collectibles always fluctuate. But, if parents or grandparents had saved a Teddy Roosevelt campaign button, it could now list for up to $3,000.00.

"It's no wonder people are trying to get these popular Bills when you look at the current market for historic treasures from past elections. A vintage Presidential Currency collection recently listed for $5,750.00 on a popular online auction, and a Ronald Reagan Inaugural Medallion was listed at $3,295.00," White said.

The smartest collectors are setting aside their political preferences to get the Bills for both candidates, so they can have the complete Presidential Election set for 2004.

"Complete collections are always the most desirable. Just imagine how much more a matched set of 1860 Lincoln-Douglas campaign posters would be worth today."

"Savvy collectors also know that items for losing candidates can become valuable. A newspaper with the famous 'Dewey Wins' headline from the 1948 campaign is now worth up to $800.00," said White. "Most everyone wants a complete set with both candidates, and they want extras to give as gifts to the children and grandchildren."

To discourage hoarding, dealers must submit requests in writing for 10 or more banded packs of 5 Bills. But, the general public can get what they need by calling the National Direct Hotline at **1-800-755-4998** now and asking for **Dept. BK875** "Limits for dealers will be strictly enforced," White said.

How to get them

The U.S. Monetary Exchange is releasing the popular 2004 Presidential Campaign Dollar Bills to the general public. Call the **National Direct Hotline 1-800-755-4998, ask for Dept BK875**. The standard $9 processing fee plus shipping gets you a banded five-pack of the vault fresh, crisp new U.S. legal tender Campaign Dollars at face value. Satisfaction is guaranteed.

HISTORIC VALUE: If grandparents had saved a Teddy Roosevelt Campaign Button, it could list for $3,000.00 today.

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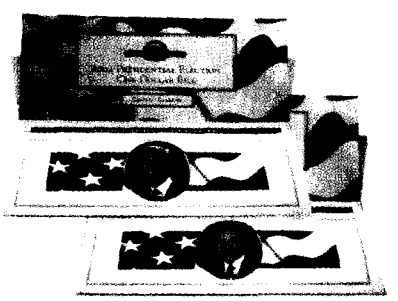
How much are they listed for today?

Values of collectibles fluctuate and there are never any guarantees, but just look at how much these past historic presidential items are listed for today.

Historic Election Item	*Today's List*
Vintage U.S. Currency Presidents Collection	*$5,750.00*
Truman "60 Million People Working" Button	*$1,630.99*
Teddy Roosevelt Campaign Button	*$3,000.00*
1912 Democratic Convention Emblem	*$2,499.00*
Truman/Dewey "Dewey Wins" Newspaper	*$800.00*
Vintage Collection of Campaign Buttons	*$1,999.99*
Ronald Reagan Inaugural Medallion	*$3,295.00*
1976 Carter Peanut Handle Campaign Cane	*$450.00*



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epidemic waiting to happen. Each year flu viruses circle the globe, moving into Asia in the spring and summer and back to North America in the winter. Surface proteins change along the way so that the previous year's vaccine doesn't work against the following year's variation.

Each year in February, the Centers for Disease Control meets with the vaccine-makers—all two of them—and decides which strain of the virus to anticipate for next year. Then they both make the same vaccine. Last year the committee bet on the Panama strain, but a rogue "Fujian" strain suddenly emerged as a surprise invader. A mini-epidemic resulted and 93 children died, only two of them properly vaccinated.

With several companies competing in the field, as was once the case, somebody would have been more likely to produce a dark horse vaccine. If that rogue strain emerged, the dissenting company would hit the jackpot, and there would be ample supplies of an effective vaccine, at least for those most at risk. In the "planned economy" of the CDC, however, there is no back-up for an unexpected turn of events. This year there isn't even a front line.

Are trial lawyers ready to accept responsibility for their starring role in creating this health hazard? Don't hold your breath. "This is just the typical garbage and propaganda from the drug manufacturers," says Carlton Carl, spokesman for the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. "There's absolutely no disincentive for making vaccines. American companies don't do it for the same reason they're sending jobs overseas—because it increases their profits."

Whether doctors are quitting the profession because of an out-of-control tort system, whether malpractice premiums are the cause of health care increases—such hardy perennials of the litigation debate are still a subject of lively controversy. But with vaccines there is no argument. Trial lawyers have all but ruined the market. Yet they are still unwilling to take responsibility. ♦

Real Women's Liberation

It's happening in Afghanistan, and U.S. feminists couldn't care less. BY KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

HERE'S A CHUNK of President Bush's standard stump speech: "Think about what happened in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that the Taliban ran that country. Young girls couldn't even go to school. They were not only harboring terrorists, they had this dark ideology of hate. And people showed up in droves to vote. Freedom is powerful. People have gone from darkness to light because of liberty. The first voter in the Afghan presidential election was a 19-year-old woman."

And here's Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization for Women: "In only three-and-a-half years, George W. Bush and the right-wing leadership in Congress have undermined and eroded more than four decades of advancements for women. . . . We are declaring a State of Emergency for women's rights and calling upon all of our allies and supporters to get involved in the election process to put an end to the relentless attacks on women."

Before the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11, the Taliban regime was the gold standard for horrifying treatment of women. The burqa became *the* symbol of female oppression. It was invoked by women's rights activists of various stripes worldwide as the worst of the worst. The writer Azar Nafisi quotes a woman functionary of the straitlaced Iranian regime as saying, "Look at Somalia or Afghanistan. Compared to them, we live like queens."

In 2001, NOW regularly issued "Action Alerts" on the plight of Afghan women. One of them reported that "when the Taliban took over the capital city of Kabul in September 1996, it issued an edict that stripped women and girls of their rights, holding the Afghan people hostage under a brutal system of gender apartheid. . . . Women were prohibited from being seen or heard. The windows of their homes were painted, and they could not appear in public unless wearing the full-body covering, the burqa. Women were beaten for showing a bit of ankle or wearing noisy shoes."

Fast forward to October 9, 2004, when about 4 million women voted for the first time ever in Afghanistan. A statement on the election from the United Nations' Division for the Advancement of Women begins by noting that "insufficient information is available on the actual participation of women on election day," but does wanly concede that "this first election has been an important process to increase women's participation in the political life of their country." Exhibiting the usual U.N. preference for progress on paper, the statement closes by noting with approval that Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women last year.

The folks over at NOW seem even less enthusiastic about the progress in Afghanistan. The NOW "Issues" page headed "Women in Afghanistan" hasn't been updated for two-and-a-half years. And there is no mention of the Afghan election on the main pages of the NOW website. Calls requesting a statement went unreturned.

In contrast, the Feminist Majority

Katherine Mangu-Ward is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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EFE Photos / Fayyaz Ahmed

Afghan women lined up to vote in the October 9 elections

Foundation has been regularly updating its Afghanistan pages. Notably absent, however, is any praise for the Bush administration's role in bringing suffrage to Afghan women. Even the U.N.'s bland boilerplate seems like cheerleading compared with the Feminist Majority's assessment of the situation: U.S. figures on female voter registration and participation are "greater than previous UN estimates," and therefore suspect. Not to worry, though—"the Feminist Majority is closely following the election process and is now trying to get the real story of what is happening on the ground." Reports from "on the ground" confirm their suspicions, namely that "there are areas of the country where not a single woman has registered."

This assertion is likely true, of course—Afghanistan is far from a utopia—but the Feminist Majority's unwillingness to give even a nod to the American role reveals just how single-mindedly committed they are to beating Bush. While the situation "on the ground" in Afghanistan is grave, the Feminist Majority focuses considerably more effort on reminding Americans that it's not all sunshine and roses here in the United States. The foundation has chosen to do so by distributing slogan-imprinted neon pink ballpoint pens. The pens urge women to "vote as if your life depends on it. It does." When lives are literally threatened in Afghanistan, the play on words intended for American women rings hollow.

Among groups that have focused on the situation of women in Afghanistan in the past, Human Rights Watch is an honorable exception to the hear-no-good, see-no-good, speak-no-good approach being taken by most of their colleagues.

In the last two months, Human Rights Watch has issued two comprehensive reports, one entirely about the challenges facing women in Afghanistan's emerging democracy. Both reports open with praise for the recent "notable improvements for women and girls" in Afghanistan. And the one on democracy avoids the temptation to blame the United States alone for Afghanistan's continuing problems, though it finds plenty to complain of. "In 2001," it says, "improving the rights of Afghan women was at the top of the international agenda; in 2004, despite many well-intentioned programs for women, women's human rights appear to be more of an afterthought." The report concludes with recommendations for Afghan president Hamid Karzai, NATO, the U.N., the United States, and international donors.

It is true, of course, that women are still suffering in many parts of Afghanistan under the rule of religiously conservative warlords with whom the United States teamed up to defeat the Taliban. As the report notes, "Whatever the motives or aspirations of the international community, these men did not fight the Taliban over women's rights." Neither, when it comes right down to it, did George Bush. But the president is committed to seeing the democracy experiment in Afghanistan through. He held his nose and made common cause with some unsavory characters in order to do what he thought justice demanded; and he's affected innumerable Afghan women's lives for the good.

Too bad those who profess to care most about the rights of women can't bring themselves to follow his example. ♦

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The First 100 Days

What a Kerry foreign policy might look like.

BY MARC GINSBERG

"ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT" and "anger management" both come to mind when one attempts to envisage the transition from a Bush to a Kerry foreign policy. And the changes wouldn't be merely matters of attitude. The first 100 days of a Kerry administration would represent a counterrevolution both in tone and in substance against the startling foreign policy departures ushered in four years ago.

The buzzwords of the Bush Doctrine would be swept away. Gone would be the "axis of evil" and "preemptive doctrine." Gone, too, would be "coalitions of the willing" and "old Europe." There would be a total housecleaning of ideologues who consider "alliance" a dirty word. Bush's "take it or leave it" unilateralism would give way to the greatest diplomatic charm offensive since Jackie Kennedy wowed Charles de Gaulle. Air Force One and Air Force Two would log a lot of global miles, particularly to Europe and a hostile Muslim world, in an effort to reverse the rising tide of anti-Americanism and put a new, fresh face on America's tattered world image.

However, those searching for an overarching Kerry foreign policy vision or doctrine would have to wait. Waging the "more effective" struggle against Islamic extremists that Kerry promises on campaign stops would have to suffice. A post-9/11 Democratic foreign policy that places American moral values on the same pedestal as American power, to strengthen international consensus and institutions to defeat terror, is still a work in progress.

Nevertheless, John Kerry is certain in his gut about what is right with his view of the world and what is wrong with George Bush's view. The two men have starkly different assessments of who the enemy is and what it will take to defeat him. A Kerry presidency would demonstrate that divide from the outset.

In a major foreign policy address at UCLA last February, Kerry contrasted his foreign policy philosophy with the Bush Doctrine, with its good nations pitted against evil ones that promote terror. "The war on terror," Kerry said, "is not a clash of civilizations; it is a clash of civilization against chaos, of the best hopes of humanity against dogmatic fears of progress and the future."

In other words, in order to "drain the terror swamp," the United States will need to wage a holistic struggle within a unified global alliance determined to preserve order and peace, marshalling additional global resources to neutralize conditions that give rise to terrorism: failed and failing states and their attendant poverty, unemployment, disease, and despair. In Kerry's view, the United States alone cannot prevail, since terrorists are dependent less on state sponsors than on loose confederations and networks operating in environments that the United States alone cannot alter.

During their foreign policy debate in Florida, John Kerry focused his fire against the very core principles guiding the Bush administration's foreign policy: Iraq, Kerry insisted, constituted a "profound diversion" from the war on terror and the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction and al Qaeda. Bush's assertive unilateralism, he said, has robbed the United States of global legitimacy and influence and accelerated the spread of malevolent anti-Americanism. According to Kerry, restoring global trust in America's moral values is a precondition for winning the ideological struggle that is fueling Islamic terrorism.

A president-elect Kerry would put in place a Democratic national security team sobered by the vital necessity of reorienting American national security objectives. Their goals would be to successfully end the American occupation of Iraq and to focus on combating Islamic terrorism and the threat posed by WMD. The people who would be members of this team are neither callow nor lacking in intent or conviction. Rather, they are an experienced and talented group, well known to allies and adversaries alike. Most held major positions in the Clinton administration and have been chomping at the bit to restore respect for America's military and economy, and to regain global admiration for America's values.

Expect a President Kerry's inaugural address to reflect his determination to realign America's global objectives and its values, without sacrificing its right to act alone when necessary. Guided by his belief that America has dangerously abandoned its moral compass, the new president would outline a series of foreign policy initiatives reflecting his commitment to forge a new international alliance against terrorism. He would take the same message fairly quickly to the United Nations.

There would, however, be no honeymoon for the Kerry foreign policy team. It would inherit a quagmire in Iraq, uncertain and messy, along with real terror threats from al Qaeda and loosely affiliated offspring, and the twin threats posed by Iran's and North Korea's acquisition and potential dissemination of WMD.

So given all this, and gazing into a crystal ball, what would be the new president's initial foreign policy priorities and actions?

¶ **IRAQ:** As profound as John Kerry insists his differences are with

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George Bush on Iraq, a Kerry administration would be largely wedded to the same goals as the Bush administration: restoring stability to set the stage for a transition to a pluralistic society. The promised mid-course correction would nevertheless attempt to "de-Americanize" our intervention by convening a global summit on Iraq whose objectives would be to (1) build a new U.N. Protection Force to oversee elections, (2) commit NATO to dispatch a peacekeeping force to protect Iraq's border from terrorist infiltration and accelerate training of Iraq's own counterinsurgency forces, and (3) designate a new international high commissioner for Iraqi reconstruction, ending American hegemony over Iraqi reconstruction plans in order to give other countries a stake in Iraq's future.

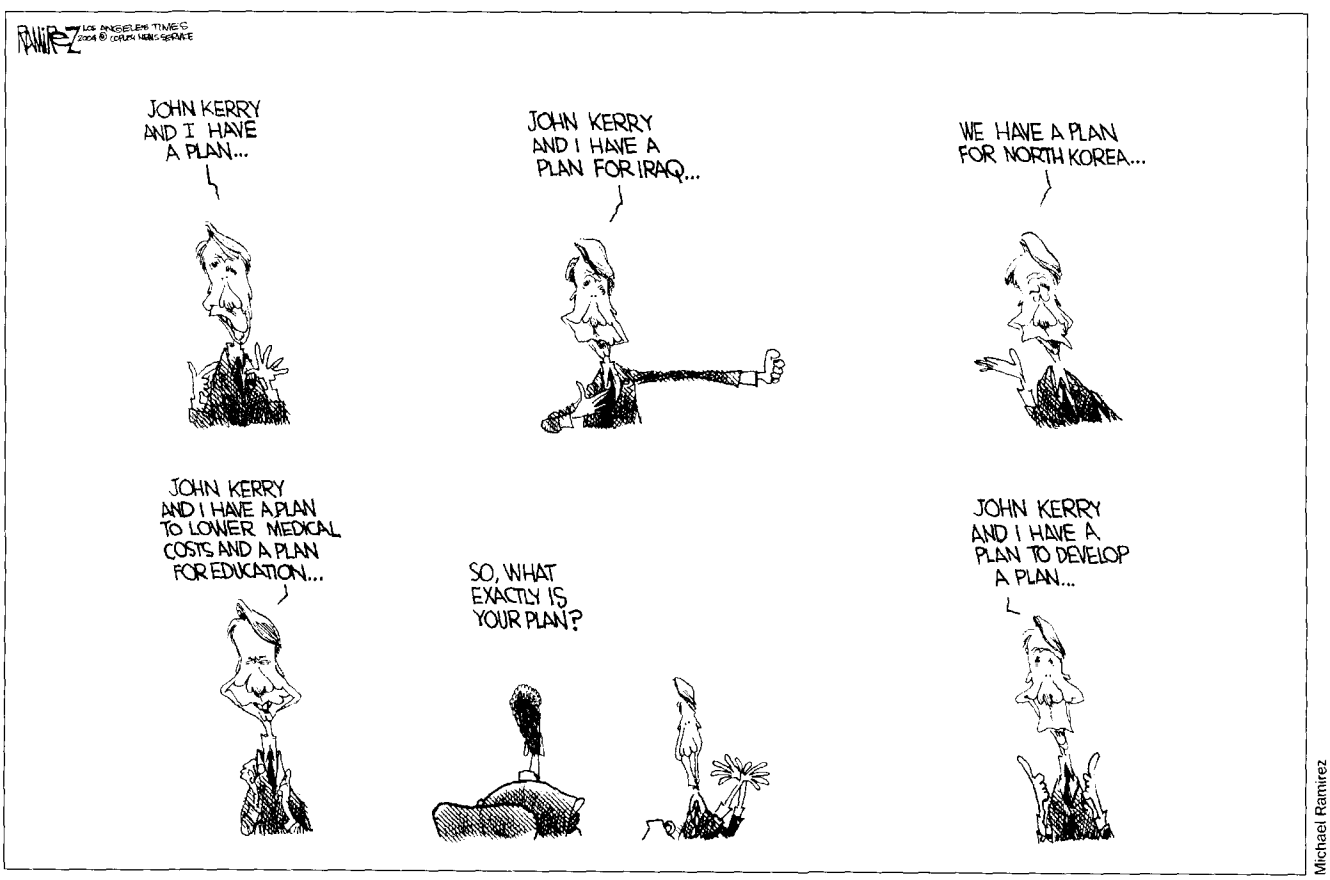
¶ **Nuclear Proliferation:** Look for Kerry to designate a new WMD nonproliferation czar to retool the national security structure to focus attention on "loose nukes" and other potential sources of proliferation.

¶ **The Middle East:** Kerry rejects Bush's "democratic dominoes" view of the Middle East, which envisions a model democracy in Iraq that eventually is replicated throughout the region. He believes that Muslim hostility toward the United States will be reversed only when Arabs consider the United States fully reengaged in promoting peace in the region and upholding its own moral principles in its dealings with the region. As president, Kerry might appoint two senior envoys to the region, the first to focus on the moribund Arab-Israeli peace process, the second to open new lines of communication with the Muslim world.

¶ **Korea:** Expect a President Kerry, while not rejecting the six-way talks of the Bush administration, to reengage bilaterally with North Korea in an attempt to forge a "tamper-proof" grand bargain to neutralize Pyongyang's nuclear program. Kerry has also criticized Bush's decision to withdraw troops from the Korean peninsula. But he has not indicated what he would do if the talks fail.

¶ **Iran:** Iran's nuclear ambitions and sponsorship of terror pose one of the earliest and gravest challenges to a Kerry administration. Kerry has declared his intent to seek an internationally enforced sanctions regime against Tehran if it fails to comply with the safeguards prescribed by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Expect Kerry to construct a "carrots and sticks" approach to Iran.

¶ **NATO and Europe:** Kerry has no illusions that France will agree to contribute troops to a NATO-led stabilization/peacekeeping force in Iraq. Neither is he naive about France's determination to check American "hyperpower." Nevertheless, a President Kerry would devote considerable personal time to rebuilding ties with Germany, Spain, and France, and would seek to build a consensus within NATO to support an expanded peripheral role in Iraq and in the Middle East. Expect him to convene an early NATO summit on the Middle East. ♦



Michael Ramirez

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The Perfect Democrat?

How to win in Oklahoma if you're not a Republican. BY BETH HENARY

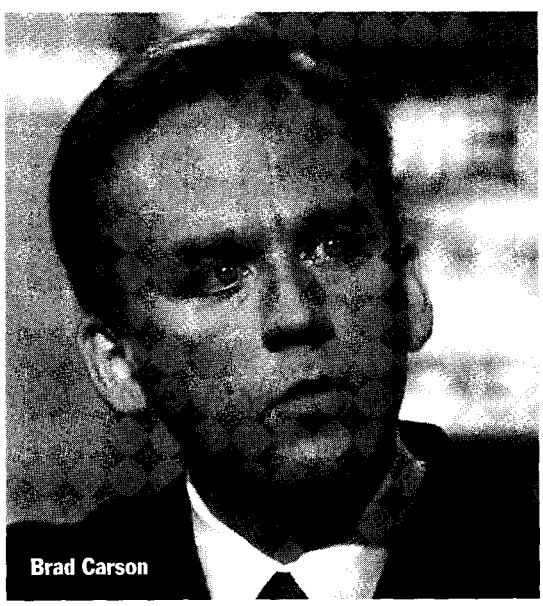
Marietta, Oklahoma

IN 2002, Oklahoma Democrat Brad Carson described his party's self-awareness problem in the pages of this magazine. "The party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt," Carson wrote, "still sees itself as representing the common people, the salt of the earth, the hardscrabble men and women of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Tom Joads of the world. But, despite the pretense, it simply isn't true. Blue-collar Americans have largely rebuffed the Democratic party."

If Carson—a congressman from eastern Oklahoma and the Democratic contender for the Senate seat being vacated by conservative Republican Don Nickles—were right, one would have to predict his resounding defeat on November 2. Oklahoma is full of ordinary Americans, and the challenges facing the state include an aging population, creaky infrastructure, and job loss. Besides, it is a thoroughly Republican state. It gave George W. Bush 60 percent of the vote in 2000, and polls now show the president ahead by as much as 30 points. National Republicans anxious to hold onto their narrow edge in the Senate are peeved that Nickles's seat is in play at all.

But a poll released by *Sooner Poll.com* on October 8 showed the race between Carson and Republican Tom Coburn a statistical dead heat, with 21 percent undecided.

Only the perfect Democratic candidate, combined with a string of Republican fumbles, could have made this contest close. Unfortunately for the GOP, Carson is the perfect Democratic candidate. From Baylor University in Texas, he went to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, then studied law at the University of Oklahoma. Early in his legal career he was recognized for his service to the state's poor and indigent, and at 37 he has the true wonk's detailed command of issues—witness his 65-page glossy campaign magazine explaining his plans for western Oklahoma alone.


Brad Carson

Getty / Alex Wong

His opponent is an obstetrician from Muskogee. Coburn, who was Carson's predecessor in Congress, entered the House in the legendary freshman class of 1994, and six years later honored a term-limit promise. He was an anomaly for Oklahoma's 2nd District, which had not sent a Republican to Congress since the 1920s. In Washington he was known for his stubborn insistence on fiscal responsibility and his dislike of political pork. Fellow Republicans called him "bull-headed" and a "burr under the saddle of the party."

Coburn wasn't the GOP establishment's choice for the Senate race. In the primary, party types backed former Oklahoma City mayor Kirk Humphreys, partly because Coburn entered the race late, but also because he was seen as a weaker general election candidate. In one of many wince-inducing remarks since his primary victory, Coburn referred to state legislators as "crapheads" for not getting done what he thought needed doing in Oklahoma City. Other comments have offended those of Native American heritage, including Carson.

One member of Oklahoma's congressional delegation said the outcome of the race depends on what ultimately captures the public's attention.

"If Brad Carson is able to make this race about what's in Oklahoma's best parochial interest, he'll win," said the congressman, a Republican who asked not to be named. "If it's about who represents the core values of the state, I'll say Tom Coburn does. We'll lose if it's about who brings the most money to the state."

On the stump, Carson hammers on Coburn's aversion to pork, charging that a Senator Coburn wouldn't "fight for Oklahoma." Carson speaks of rural health centers he's brought to his district and says the state needs 50 more. He wants federal dollars to fix roads he calls the worst in the country.

"This campaign is an epic struggle," Carson tells Marietta residents. "I've never heard anybody say that it is not the job of an elected official to fight for the people who put him in office—except for one. And that is Tom Coburn."

A few hours later, in Madill, Car-

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son turns up the volume: "I'm not saying he could have done more, or that he could have tried just a tad bit harder. I'm saying he did nothing."

The Coburn campaign responds by casting Carson as a big-spending liberal. State senator Glenn Coffee says this is fair. He points to a Club for Growth ad that charges Carson proposed $787 billion in new spending in the last Congress. ("He's a bigger spender than John Kerry, Ted Kennedy, and Hillary Clinton combined," the voice-over says.)

As Coffee sees it, Coburn wants to cut government waste while still doing things important for his state. For example, he wants to reverse Oklahoma's status as a donor state for transportation dollars and secure federal funding for a major road project in Oklahoma City. He has long wanted to radically transform Medicare and Social Security. Coffee even surmises Oklahoma would receive more federal help if the GOP retained control of the Senate, where Oklahoma's other senator, Jim Inhofe, chairs the Environment and Public Works committee.

The GOP congressman agrees that Oklahoma will benefit from a Senate team that works well with the president. He says Coburn exhibits badly needed leadership on entitlements, while Carson's record is a matter of concern.

"Every vote [Carson has cast] for four years has been a calculation for a run for the U.S. Senate," the congressman said. "You don't really know what he believes. I guess we'll figure it out if he gets to the Senate. . . . My guess is he'll drift to the left."

Coburn's campaign cites instances in which Carson appears to have changed his position, and GOP operatives say his failure to support a budget plan for FY 2005 is evidence of political calculation. At least you know where Coburn stands, they say.

Despite Coburn's verbal blunders, the race has stayed close. Carson, meanwhile, may have overplayed his hand with an ad berating Coburn for not voting to give the Federal Emergency Management Agency more money after tornadoes pummeled Oklahoma in 1999. The *Daily Oklahoman*, truth-squadding the ad, revealed that Coburn had voted for the FEMA appropriation covering the period of the tornadoes. In a statement clarifying his position, Coburn added, "The agency had a billion-dollar surplus, and the additional money would not have gone to help the victims in Oklahoma."

Carson rejects the liberal label, and it is politically important for him that it not stick. He opposes Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry's proposal to raise taxes on the top 2 percent of income earners, which he says would hurt small businesses. He says grandstanding against President Bush's judicial nominees is not the way to fix a confirmation system that has been abused from both sides of the aisle.

"If we don't like who [the president] is appointing, we should beat [the president]," Carson said, calling the withdrawal of Miguel Estrada, a Bush nominee to the D.C. Circuit who met unyielding Democratic opposition, a tragedy of the process.

A *Congressional Quarterly* analysis finds Carson has voted with his fellow Democrats about 75 percent of the time, and with President Bush 50 percent of the time. In 2002, Carson's American Conservative Union score was 40—which was 20 points higher than John Kerry's.

Oklahoma hasn't had a Democratic senator since David Boren retired in 1994. It did elect a Democratic governor in 2002, but Brad Henry won largely thanks to a strong third-party candidate who peeled away votes from the Republican. The other four members of the state's congressional delegation are Republicans.

In his 2002 WEEKLY STANDARD article, Carson argued that the Democrats had become the party of elites and minorities, and had forgotten regular folks like the people of Oklahoma. But he seemed to exempt himself from the charge. "There are exceptions, of course," he wrote—perhaps foreshadowing the Democrats' hopes for him on November 2. ♦

insights

A NEW MUSEUM SERIES FOR 2004–2005

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Whither the Jessecrats?

They hold the balance of power in the North Carolina Senate race. BY DUNCAN CURRIE

IF JESSE HELMS taught North Carolina Democrats one thing, it's this: "Jessecrats" matter. The Democratic supporters of the retired GOP senator are the kind of folks Howard Dean pigeonholed as "guys with Confederate flags in their pick-up trucks." They're also the guys who were the bane of a succession of Democrats trying to unseat Helms. In 2002, they helped give Republican Senate candidate Elizabeth Dole a 9-point win over Democrat Erskine Bowles.

This year, Bowles is again the Democratic nominee for Senate. A poll taken in mid-September found him up 10 points on his rival, five-term Republican congressman Richard Burr, but the race is now a dead heat. Both sides believe that Jessecrats are still the vital swing bloc. Whoever wins their support will likely clinch the election.

"We're campaigning for those voters very hard," says Burr spokesman Doug Heye. Indeed, Burr scheduled a rally in Goldsboro—prime Jessecrat turf—with Helms himself on October 16. The Bowles camp is making similar bids. "We are definitely trying to reach out to them as best we can," says Bowles spokesman Carlos Monje.

Jessecrats for the most part are white, low- to middle-income voters living in rural or semi-rural eastern North Carolina. They are culturally conservative, temperamentally populist, and politically moderate. Their ranks consist largely of men, though this is changing. The Jessecrats who turned out for Dole in 2002 were a broader faction than usual.

Richard Burr

Earl Kelerny

"We're not *really* talking about the old-school Jessecrats," says John Hood of the Raleigh-based John Locke Foundation. "Jessecrats were thought to be middle-aged or older, male, with red necks, eatin' barbecue." The "Elizabeth Dole Democrats," Hood notes, include these fellows, but also many women. The demographic has become "more female" and "somewhat less hard-edged. But nevertheless, it's the kind of electorate for whom Bill Clinton is a polarizing figure."

The ex-president has, indeed, emerged as a campaign factor. Bowles served as Clinton's chief of staff—a fact Burr hammers home to Tar Heel voters. Why bring up Clinton? First, to connect Bowles with Clinton's record on a bevy of issues such as health care and taxes. Second, to link him with Clinton's probity (or lack thereof).

"Clinton is not a popular figure in the state," says GOP pollster Frank Luntz. "There was 'Clinton fatigue' in North Carolina that was greater than [in] other states." He's certainly unpopular among Jessecrats. In a pair of TV ads now airing, Burr ties Bowles to Clinton on defense spending and trade.

Trade is a dominant theme in North Carolina and has acute resonance with Jessecrats. Many work in old manufacturing industries, such as textiles and furniture. They have borne the brunt of plant closings and layoffs, with jobs being shipped overseas.

"Those people don't want to hear about free trade," says North Carolina State University political economist Roland Stephen. "And they are going to punish candidates who are associated with free trade."

Burr and Bowles, as it happens, are both known as free traders. Each backed NAFTA in 1994. Now they're both hedging. Bowles says he won't support new free-trade pacts until existing ones are enforced. Burr admits NAFTA may have hurt North Carolinians.

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But Burr has an ace in the hole—China. For Jessecrats, China is the very emblem of free trade gone awry. As Hood puts it, "China is the bugaboo." In Congress, Burr voted eight times against favored trading status for Beijing. He also worked to block illegal importation of Chinese textiles. During those same years, Bowles endorsed China trade. A new Burr TV ad claims Bowles was in fact "Clinton's chief negotiator" on U.S.-China deals, though the Bowles camp denies this.

An issue peculiar to North Carolina is the $10.1 billion buyout for tobacco farmers included in the corporate tax bill Congress passed earlier this month. This measure, first pushed in the House, has enormous salience for tobacco-growing Jessecrats. "The buyout is a feather in Burr's cap," says Rob Christensen, a political reporter for the Raleigh *News & Observer*. Iraq is a non-issue, since both candidates were pro-war. Terrorism and taxes have gotten some play. So has health care. The first two help Burr; the latter Bowles.

Socially, one topic trumps all: gay marriage. Burr opposes it, and was a cosponsor of the Federal Marriage Amendment in the House. But he is no vocal culture warrior. He rarely discusses gay marriage on the stump. Bowles is anti-gay marriage but would vote for a constitutional amendment only "as a last resort," according to a spokesman. Burr has run radio ads on gay marriage in the eastern part of the state. They appear to have given him a boost.

Then there's the coattail factor. Mike Easley, the state's popular Democratic governor, is cruising to reelection. This will help Bowles. As the Democratic VP nominee, North Carolina senator John Edwards, whose seat is being contested, *could* help Bowles. But "Bowles is trying to put as much distance between himself and the national [Democratic] ticket as possible," says Christensen. He styles himself an independent, "centrist" Democrat. And George W. Bush? "I think Bush helps Burr more than Edwards helps Bowles," says Brad Coker, managing director of Mason-Dixon polling. Bush won North Carolina by 13 points in 2000. He'll carry it again, if not by as much.

North Carolina is typically a late-decider. Thus the Burr strategy: His campaign held back until after Labor Day, then unleashed a torrent of ads. And they've been effective. After trailing for months, Burr has now pulled even. A Rasmussen poll from early October puts Burr in the lead by two points, while a SurveyUSA poll has Bowles leading by one. A Mason-Dixon poll shows Bowles's negatives up and positives down. Burr's negatives are up too, but his positives have jumped by 14 points since July.

Frank Luntz cites Burr's charisma. A former Wake Forest football star, Burr is attractive and well-spoken. "He is the definition of someone who takes lemons and turns them into lemonade," Luntz says. "He is one of the best five communicators that the Republicans have in Washington." But Bowles has better name recognition—his father, Hargrove "Skipper" Bowles, was a state legislator—and experience running statewide.

It may come down to the Jessecrats one more time. Though North Carolina is a solid "red" state in presidential voting, its Democrats lead Republicans in voter registration by 13 points. "Burr's making some inroads," says Mason-Dixon's Coker. "He's getting 17 percent of the Democratic vote." Will that be enough? Coker is doubtful. Burr "is pulling off some of the Jessecrats," he says, "but I think he'll still need to pull more of them to win." ♦

An Army of One

What it's like to be the only Republican in your high school. BY DAN GELERNTER

I GO TO AMITY SR. HIGH SCHOOL in Woodbridge, Connecticut—a liberal public school in a liberal state. Conservatives are scarce around here and outspoken ones are scarcer. I am so "unusual" that people (friends and even some I don't know) call me "Dan, Dan, Republican," which is a good-natured joke, sort of.

These days, I never go to school without my Election 2004 battle kit—a hefty red folder that I carry in my backpack titled (on account of my infinite humility) "Proving People Wrong." This folder holds everything from IRS tax return figures to a comparison of Bush versus Gore in terms of college grades (Bush wins). I always have my folder with me, so that when I get into a political discussion (which might happen a dozen times a day and is likely to happen even more often as Election Day approaches), I can confront my opponents with the facts. They *hate* facts. They prefer to take refuge behind a slogan: Bush is Dumb.

The teachers are predictable liberals; the students are more worrying. In the white-painted low-ceilinged cafeteria with noise echoing off the brick and cinderblock walls, I eat lunch at a table of eight friends among 400 noisy kids. Politics is usually on the menu. Most lunch-table liberals say that they do not love America, and would not defend it. One boy says he'd just as soon live in Canada. They can't understand why I should be so enthusiastic about our country. Isn't it more or less interchangeable with a few dozen other rich western democracies?

Daniel Gelernter publishes the Republican Dan *blog at* republicandan.blogspot.com.

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As I was writing this article, I chatted online with one of my best friends, a liberal who spent part of his summer working in Washington as a page in the House of Representatives. He asked what my article was about. To put it briefly, I said, "It's about kids who don't love their country." He answered: "Do they have to love their country? Is that a requirement?"

The most striking feature of my political debates is the utter ignorance of traditional values—whether American or Christian or Jewish—shown even by intelligent students. The typical student thinks that morality is a simple matter of doing what is "good for people," and that the way to do this is to vote for Democrats, since the Democratic party stands for "making things better."

Why do students talk and think this way? As computer geeks used to say, garbage in, garbage out.

We are taught U.S. history out of politically correct textbooks. The books are boring and tedious and, what's worse, extremely misleading. The pages are carefully measured to spend equal time on the accomplishments of men and women, whites and nonwhites. They take care not to offend America's past enemies, but don't seem to worry about offending Americans.

My textbook last year, for example, was the 12th edition of *The American Pageant* by David Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and the late Thomas Bailey. Its chapter on World War II has more than a page on the relocation and internment of Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor and one sentence on the Bataan Death March. (What does one infer from this about the value of an American life?) It spends no time at all on the American GI, but gives a comprehensive discussion of the number of women who served, and where. (It carefully refers to "the 15 million men and women in uniform.") The discussion, in short, is warped, incompetent, anachronistic.

Worst of all are *The American Pageant*'s blatantly biased discussions of modern politics. Compare the chapters on Carter and Reagan. Carter's actions are often described as "courageous." For instance: Carter's "popularity remained exceptionally high during his first few months in office, even when he courted public disfavor by courageously keeping his campaign promise to pardon some ten thousand draft evaders of the Vietnam War era." Or: "Carter courageously risked humiliating failure by inviting President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel to a summit conference at Camp David."

The book dramatically describes how Carter, in the summer of 1979, "like a royal potentate of old, summoning the wise men of the realm for their counsel in a time of crisis," went up to Camp David ("the mountaintop") while his people awaited "the results of these extraordinary deliberations." Then he made a "remarkable television address" in which he "chided his fellow citizens for falling into a 'moral and spiritual crisis' and for being too concerned with 'material goods.'" (Everyone else remembers this event as Carter's pathetic "malaise" speech.) The authors sum Carter up as "an unusually intelligent, articulate, and well-meaning president," but one who was "badly buffeted by events beyond his control, such as the soaring price of oil, runaway inflation, and the galling insult of the continuing hostage crisis in Iran." In other words: He did a great job, and the awful things that happened during his administration weren't his fault.

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The Reagan chapter starts by describing Reagan's high hopes and goals, but quickly deteriorates: "At first, 'supply-side' economics seemed to be a beautiful theory mugged by a gang of brutal facts" as the economy went downhill. Then there was a "healthy" recovery. But "for the first time in the twentieth century, income gaps widened between the richest and poorest Americans. The poor got poorer and the very rich grew fabulously richer, while middle-class incomes largely stagnated."

This is how the authors describe the largest peacetime economic boom of the 20th century, a period in which the average income of all quintiles from poorest to richest increased. The book then quickly moves on to discuss the deficit: "The staggering deficits of the Reagan administration constituted a great economic failure. . . . The deficits virtually guaranteed that future generations of Americans would either have to work harder than their parents, lower their standard of living, or both, to pay their foreign creditors when the bills came due."

Reagan's most important achievement, ending the Cold War, is never mentioned in the Reagan section. The authors imply that the credit for ending the Cold War goes to none other than Mikhail Gorbachev. My classmates swallow it all. They believe that Gorbachev suddenly decided one day that it was time for his country to lose the Cold War. My history teacher thought it incredible that I refused to credit Gorbachev with "allowing us to win."

Perhaps needless to add, there are no lessons on the virtue of patriotism. Like the textbooks, my teachers are extremely charitable when discussing American enemies; from the Soviet Union to the Vietnamese Communists, they all get the benefit of the doubt. I would like to believe that this is only a temporary situation, perhaps one that a few well-placed educational reformers could begin to correct. But my fear is that it will take a long time to repair our public schools. Meanwhile, what will become of a country whose youngest citizens have been taught to have so little affection for it? ♦

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The Birthplace of Bush Paranoia

How the peculiar political culture of Austin, Texas, infected the presidential race.

By Andrew Ferguson

Austin

"For a while I thought about moving to Atlanta," Jeff Lewis was saying, "but then I realized the Austin connection, being *here*, gives us a kind of special edge, and we really, really didn't want to lose that sort of, I don't know, *allure*. I mean, other people do what we do, but we're here, right in this man's backyard."

Jeff is barefoot and ear-ringed and prefers black—today it's black jeans under a flyaway black linen shirt, unbuttoned to the sternum. With his business partner Bill Callan, he is founder of "Two Unemployed Democrats Co." an Internet and mail-order business that not long ago, in response to popular demand, opened an outlet store in Austin, the state capital of Texas. They sell bumper stickers, T-shirts, lawn signs, refrigerator magnets, and coffee mugs dedicated to a single, timely proposition: George W. Bush is (1) an incompetent moron driving America into a ditch; (2) an evil genius bent on having America run the world; (3) a plutocrat; (4) a puppet of corporate America; (5) a Machiavel; (6) a dupe of Karl Rove, who's a Machiavel; (7) a cynic whose every utterance is a lie; and (8) a daddy's boy who can barely talk. Hold the email: I am aware that technically this counts as more than one single, timely proposition. But that's what happens when you spend enough time in Austin with people who are obsessed with George Bush. The strands of contempt all begin to run together.

The Two Unemployed Democrats outlet store is set implausibly in the middle of a residential neighborhood in south Austin, which is, if anything, even funkier and more self-consciously cool than north Austin. On the porch, customers are greeted by one of those inflatable punching dolls, the kind with a rounded bottom that helps it pop back up when you smash it, smash it, smash it angrily about the head. The face on the doll is a particularly horrid caricature of Bush. At his side he holds a "to-do" list, with each item checked off: "Give rich friends more tax breaks. . . . Deceive American people. . . . Attack civil liberties. . . ."

It would be unfair to Jeff and Bill to suggest that all their humor is so lame, though it would be unfair to you, the reader, to suggest that a lot of it isn't. Indeed, their entire business plan traces back to a not-terrifically-funny joke that came to Bill while he was watching TV one night. At the time both he and Jeff really were two unemployed Democrats, laid-off bartenders. This was not long before September 11, and then as now neither Jeff nor Bill liked President Bush. At all. "And he's looking at Bush and the thought just goes through Bill's head," Jeff says—Jeff is by far the more talkative of the two, Bill stands by pensively during our interview—"he thinks, 'Like Father, Like Son—One Term Only.' When he told me about it, I just thought, 'Oh yes.'"

Jeff had worked briefly in e-commerce, so they decided to emblazon Bill's inspiration on T-shirts and market them over the web. "We had one slogan, one T-shirt, one coffee cup, one bumper sticker." Orders trickled in through their website, *seeyageorge.com*. They hit the road, opening booths at peace demonstrations and Gay Pride Day parades. Their product line grew to include lines that were sometimes funnier ("Somewhere in Texas, there's a village missing an idiot"; "I'm bored. . . . Who do we invade next?"; "The last time people listened to a Bush, they wandered around the desert for 40 years") and sometimes a little too angry, a little too righteous, a little too flared-nostril, to be funny: "Mission Accomplished My Ass"; "No one Died When Clinton Lied"; "How Many Lives Per Gallon?"; "If you aren't completely appalled, you haven't been paying attention."

Now orders come in at a rate of 500 a day, not only for

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T-shirts and bumper stickers, but also for inflatable Bush dolls (the nose grows, Pinocchio-like, when you blow him up) and Bush playing cards and CDs featuring such songs as "I Hate Republicans" and "The Yeller Bush of Texas." Twenty-two employees work 12-hour shifts. Jeff and Bill hope to top a million dollars in sales by November 3, when, they insist, they will put themselves out of business, no matter who wins the election.

"I have to say we've changed our mission a bit since the beginning," Jeff said. "We thought we were just having fun, exercising our First Amendment right to poke fun at the president. But then we started getting these emails, it's really kind of touching. . . . We were really connecting with people in a serious way, too. 'Thank God we found you. You give us hope. It's about time there was a voice out there. . . .'

"And of course it just makes sense that the voice should come out of Austin."

It does make sense, it does. One is tempted to dawdle at the Two Unemployed Democrats store because, if (like some people I could name) you have a journalistically desperate cast of mind, the place practically screams *Metaphor!* Disgorging from its pleasantly shabby surroundings a whole host of anti-Bush paraphernalia to all points of the country, the business serves as a tiny symbol of Austin itself. With its university-town origins, its large population of musicians and artists, its long tradition of political liberalism, Austin is, as Jeff says, the "anti-Texas," where "Texans who don't really like Texas" choose to live. More important, it has also, in a larger sense, exported its own peculiar brand of Bush hatred to Democrats from one coast to the other.

Austin has a lot to answer for, whether you're a Democrat or a Republican. Ponder for a moment the strange course the presidential campaign has followed these last 18 months. Judged by the simplest, crudest criterion—comparing the state of the world as it was the day he took office with the world as it will be on the day he stands for reelection—George W. Bush should be the most easily beatable presidential incumbent since Jimmy Carter. A frontal assault on Bush's record, repeated endlessly and packaged cleverly, might well have resulted in a walkaway win for whoever the Democrats had chosen to oppose him.

It hasn't worked out that way, as we know. Bush's opponents instead find themselves in a tight race they well might lose. There are lots of reasons why, but one surely is that instead of mounting a substantial critique of what the president has done and hasn't done, his Democratic adversaries have obsessed over piecing together odd, paranoid caricatures of the man who's driving them nuts—Bush as the agent of Halliburton, Bush as the idiot son of Robber Baron privilege, Bush the religious crank, the right-wing ideologue, the draft-dodger, the front man for Enron or Rove or the Saudi royals or J.R. Ewing. The caricatures are familiar now to the millions of moviegoers who saw Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, but they have an Austin pedigree; the fantasies were nurtured in the hothouse of Texas progressivism before they caught on nationwide. A large number of the most popular anti-Bush books—and many of those Moore used in assembling his movie—were written in Texas by veteran Texas activists who have grown bitter from the endless frustration and resentment that is their unhappy lot: *Bush's Brain*, *Boy Genius*, *Cronies*, *The Politics of Deceit*, *The Dirty Truth*, *Unfit Commander*, *The Mafia, CIA, and George Bush*, *Immaculate Deception: The Bush Crime Family Exposed*, *Bushwhacked*, *Shrub* . . . the list is very long. Surf the DNC website or *Buzzflash.com* or listen to one of Terry McAuliffe's press conferences, leaf through an issue of *Vanity Fair* or scan a columnist on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, and you see at once how deeply the Austin fantasy has penetrated the Democratic mind.

Shrub, by the Texas journalists Molly Ivins and Lou Dubose, was granddaddy to them all. Published in 1999, it stands even now as the template for the Bush critique. In his great essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," the political scientist Richard Hofstadter remarked how political paranoids in early America—the anti-Masons, for example—were alarmed from decade to decade by the same chimera: They convinced themselves that they saw, operating just beneath the surface of the national life, "a libertine anti-Christian movement, given to the corruption of women, the cultivation of sensual pleasures, and the violation of property rights." Now, of course, the paranoids are bewitched by the mirror image: In Bush and his followers they detect, in place of a libertine anti-Christian movement, an uptight pro-Christian movement, given to the "virtue" of women rather than their corruption, the denial of sensual pleasures instead of their cultivation, and—perhaps most shocking of all—the preservation of property rights rather than their violation. Times do change. The earlier American paranoids imagined their enemies in drunken orgies and were horrified; today they see them at prayer—and they're still horrified.

Shrub bears all the marks of Texas progressivism. The carefully shaded accounts of Bush's stint in the National Guard and of his failed career as a businessman—accounts that have been plundered and plagiarized by nearly every anti-Bush book since—jump with class resentment. The then-governor's professions of religious faith are viewed with alarm and suggestions of primitivism. Dark, controlling forces move just offstage. Hidden agendas slither

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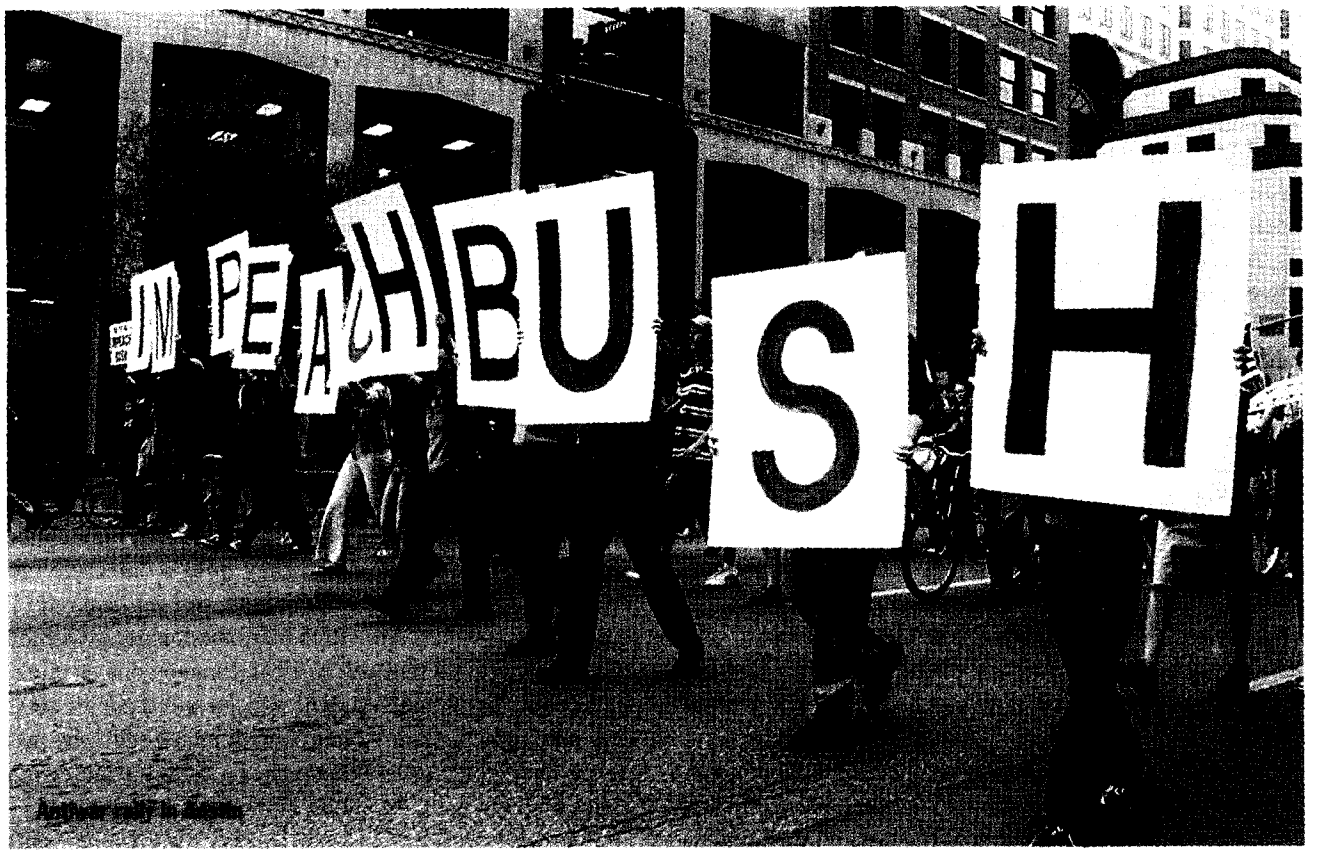

Picture Desk Photos / Jana Birchum

Anyone only in Austin.

beneath the surface of the governor's policy proposals. The contradictions of the standard Bush critique are fully ventilated, and never acknowledged. In Austin not long ago I mentioned to Lou Dubose, *Shrub*'s coauthor, that as admirable as the book is in many ways—it is a genuinely masterful polemic—a reader can never reconcile the contradictions in its portrait of Bush. Is he a dim bulb or a rascal—an ideological revolutionary or a go-along, get-along pol—a feckless rich kid or a cold-eyed manipulator? Dubose laughed. "Yes, to all of the above," he said.

Dubose is too skilled a reporter, and Ivins too high-spirited a polemicist, for *Shrub* to come off as unrelievedly dark. There's even a grudging affection for its subject lurking in there somewhere; "He's such an affable fellow," the book concludes. "It's not Bush hatred," Dubose told me, smiling. "It's more liberal condescension, which is a much finer quality." Condescension is a key to the outlook of the Texas progressive. Tinged with paranoia, it finds its perfect expression in a dizzy, half-brilliant, half-mad book by Michael Lind called *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics.*

A Texan himself, and a graduate of Austin's University of Texas who grew up to become a fellow at a Washington think tank, Lind tries to explain George Bush for the rest of the puzzled world by means of the state's geography. Unlike many Bush paranoids—Dubose and Ivins among them—Lind thinks W. is not a pretender from the East but "an authentic cultural Texan," which is to say, a rube, a Neanderthal, and a racist to boot. Having grown up in oil-patch Midland, and now a resident of hell-hole Crawford, Bush is the product, Lind says, of "the most reactionary community in English-speaking North America," where "the sadism of the white supremacists . . . has few parallels in the chronicles of human depravity." Those Aggies can be fearsome fellows indeed, and Lind is relentless in bringing the point home. *Made in Texas* is full of parenthetical asides like this: "As it happens, the George Herbert Walker Bush Library at Texas A&M in College Station, like the younger Bush's ranch, is in the heart of the historic lynching belt." Coincidence?

In opposition to Bush's Texas, this scrubland-of-the-soul, Lind posits the Hill country that has the paradisiacal Austin at its heart. "While the Waco/Crawford area is infamous for its violent religious fanatics and its shocking lynchings, the Hill country has long been a haven for mavericks of all kinds—the very sort of people who are not welcome among many of George W. Bush's neighbors." Historically it is a region that "came as close to an egalitarian society as any in the country. Most people did their own work. Labor was not considered a dishonorable

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activity to be carried out by helots of a different race or class." Such happy worker bees! "Their beer gardens rang with the melodies of their singing clubs, and scholarship, journalism, and the composition of verse were valued in a society founded by surplus nobles and refugee professors. . . . " Yet all the while, lurking just beyond the horizon of the Austin Shangri-La . . . was Texas.

And slowly, Lind concludes, Texas has come to infect the entire United States, and beyond. "From its conception of economics in terms of the exploitation of cheap labor and the plundering of nonrenewable natural resources and its plan to replace the modern social safety net with faith-based religious charity, to its minimal government political theory, its bellicose militarism and the Bible Belt Christian Zionism"—here you may take a breath—"the second Bush administration illustrates the centuries old tradition . . . of the traditional Texan elite." Bush's America, in other words, is Bush's Texas, except even bigger. "Texas politicians, like George W. Bush" and his colleagues, are "a menace to the prosperity and the security of the world as much as to that of the United States."

Lind's book is the obverse of liberal condescension, Texas style. It is shot through with another essential characteristic of the homegrown anti-Bush paranoids: hatred for themselves as Texans. "Keep Austin weird" is the cute, self-congratulatory, semi-official motto the city's residents repeat insistently, and there is, sure enough, something weird here. But the city isn't weird in the way Austinites think it is. No matter where in Austin you find yourself—the waiting room of an auto body shop, the men's room of a beer joint—you'll be confronted with a community bulletin board coated thickly with fliers announcing a poetry contest or some new development in Hatha Yoga technique. In that way Austin is no weirder than any other college town. It's weirdness lies in the fact that, unlike every other college town—Madison, Wisconsin; Lawrence, Kansas; Eugene, Oregon—it has never made peace with its home state. Texas progressivism sets itself in opposition to its surroundings, defines itself by what it isn't. It depends on a blend of boosterism (for Austin and for a few progressive neighborhoods in Houston) and contempt (for everything else north of the Rio Grande Valley and south of the Mason Dixon line). "The feeling you get in Austin sometimes," Nathan Husted told me, "is like we're all living in West Berlin during the Cold War."

Nathan and I were sitting with his wife Maka in the beer garden of Mother Egan's, on West Sixth Street in Austin. Nathan and Maka are so young and eager and idealistic, so forward-looking and well-mannered, it seems rude to pin them with the tag of Bush-hater. But they really don't like Bush very much at all. They help run Austin4Kerry, a group of activists who (I suppose this is self-explanatory) live in Austin and are rooting for (ditto) John Kerry in this year's presidential race. They felt the need for their own organization, separate from the official Democratic party. With Texas a sure thing for Bush, the local party tends to concentrate on local candidates, reckoning correctly that statewide and national candidates aren't worth the effort. The Kerry campaign has a single paid official in the state, and she's a fundraiser.

So Nathan and Maka and their friends started Austin4Kerry. "Everybody wanted to get involved in the Kerry campaign," Maka said, "but there was nothing to do." Every week or two they send out emails and invite their fellow activists to Egan's, or to Ruta Maya, a coffee shop in South Austin, where they hold a "meet-up" to swap intelligence, drink coffee or beer, and get inspired by a celebrity speaker. Ann Richards, the former governor who was martyred by Bush in 1994, came by one evening, and so did Tony Sanchez, who ran for governor in 2002 and met a similar fate—a fate shared, incidentally, by just about every Democrat who makes a play for statewide office in Texas these days. Lou Dubose gave a talk, too.

"I think everybody in Austin has read *Shrub*," said Maka.

"And *Bushwhacked*," said Nathan.

And on May 27, Ben Barnes came to speak. Barnes is a legend in Texas politics. Silver-tongued or flannel-mouthed, depending on your point of view, he was a golden boy of the Democratic party in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a protégé of LBJ and lieutenant governor before the age of 30, whose career was cut short by a peripheral, and non-indictable, brush with the Sharpstown real estate scandal that devastated the ranks of Democratic politicians in 1972. Barnes abandoned public office and went into lobbying instead, and got much richer, much more quickly, than even a Texas officeholder could. Last year he declared himself an early supporter of John Kerry.

"We wanted to tape an interview with him to use as an introduction for our website, as a very distinguished party leader who could give legitimacy to the site," Nathan said. "So we went to his office, and he was so . . . so . . . "

"He was so forceful and inspiring," said Maka.

"And we just thought, we should ask him to come to a meet-up," Nathan said.

"He stood right up there," Maka said, pointing to a spot near the front of the beer garden.

"Right there," Nathan said. "And just as an afterthought, we thought, well, let's tape his talk here, too."

"For the website," Maka said.

The Barnes tape went up on the website in early June.

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"It just sat there for a couple months," Nathan said. "Then Jim Moore saw it, when he was surfing the web." James Moore is a celebrity of sorts in Austin, a former journalist, anti-Bush agitator, and coauthor of *Bush's Brain*, an exposé about Karl Rove that's consulted like a textbook by national Democrats. The Barnes clip excited Moore inordinately. In late August he sprayed links to the Austin4Kerry site via email to his friends in the press, including a reporter for the Associated Press, who wrote a story about it, and also to Mary Mapes, a producer for *60 Minutes*. Clip in hand, Mapes and her on-air reporter Dan Rather talked Barnes into repeating his story for *60 Minutes*, where it appeared along with several "newly discovered" documents purporting to show irregularities in Bush's National Guard record.

The rest is journalism history. The story became one of the most enjoyable press scandals in recent memory. Used to handling 1,500 hits in a busy week, the Austin4Kerry website crashed when it was buried by 250,000 hits in a single weekend. "We had to buy more bandwidth," Maka said, glumly. "Bandwidth is expensive." The clip, which is still on the Austin4Kerry website, cross-cuts between the office interview with Barnes, sitting before his ego wall hung with pictures of great and powerful friends, and his speech at Mother Egan's, addressing the young people of Austin4Kerry as cars roll by on Sixth Street.

"Let's talk a minute about John Kerry and George Bush. And I know 'em both," Barnes says, name-dropping. "And I'm not name droppin' to say that I know 'em both. See, I got a young man by the name of George W. Bush in the National Guard when I was lieutenant governor. I got a lot of other people in the National Guard because I thought that was what people should do when you're in office."

Barnes went on: "I walked through the Vietnam Memorial the other day, and I looked at the names of the people that died in Vietnam, and I became more ashamed of myself than I have ever been, because it was the worst thing I ever did," he said. "I apologize to you as the voters of Texas."

The *60 Minutes* story blew up, as the world knows, because the documents on which the report was partially based were bogus. As for the Barnes interview, CBS clung to it and clings to it still, though there was some fudging in that portion of the piece, too. Barnes was speaker of the Texas House, not lieutenant governor, when Bush entered the Guard. He has shifted his story here and there over the years, depending on his audience. The dramatic fillip about being at the Vietnam Memorial "the other day" first surfaced in a different version of the story Barnes told years ago (and which didn't include a mention of Bush). When more recent visitors to Barnes's office have been treated to the story of his National Guard "shame"—this according to two separate visitors—he's pointed dramatically to a note sent to him by then-Governor Bush, hung on his ego wall. "I guess I'll have to take this down," Barnes says, removing the framed note.

It makes for a dramatic moment. But both visitors say they saw the note restored to the wall a few days later.

For our purposes, however, what was most interesting about the *60 Minutes* imbroglio was the light it shed on the tiny, hermetic world of Texas Bush-hating. Rather himself—perhaps the world's most prominent Texas Bush-hater—has a daughter, Robin, who is an activist in, and future contender for the chairmanship of, Austin's Travis County Democratic party, which Rather once helped raise money for and whose chairman at that time, David Van Os, now serves as the attorney for Bill Burkett, who gave *60 Minutes* the bogus documents and who has worked as a source for James C. Moore, who discovered the Austin4Kerry tape and whose book, *Bush's Brain*, was co-written by Wayne Slater, Austin bureau chief of the *Dallas Morning News*, whose *News* colleague, Mark Wrolstad, is married to Mapes, who produced the *60 Minutes* segment and who knew Moore when both were TV reporters in Houston, where Mapes still lives. It's dizzying to think what Bush-haters would do with this web of intimacies if they were on the other side. (And inevitably, Rather-haters have tried to spin a controversy here, too, with elaborate box charts spreading across anti-Kerry sites on the Internet.)

Not to put too fine a point on it, but there's a good explanation for why Texas progressives all seem to know each other: There aren't very many of them, and they all live together, more or less, either in Austin or in one of those progressive neighborhoods in Houston. That's one reason they can feel so self-satisfied and so bitter at the same time, and this strange combination of superiority and contempt may be what leads them to prefer caricatures and conspiracy theories to the world as it presents itself. Desperation is a pitiless goad; Mapes, we now know, worked for five years trying to nail the Bush National Guard story, in the mistaken belief that someone other than her fellow Bush-haters would care.

Yet the feeling that runs through Texas liberalism—the feeling of being besieged, outgunned, impotent if not hopeless—is well-founded. Even paranoids are sometimes on to something. For nearly a century, Texas liberals shared the majority party in Texas, the Democratic party, with conservatives. It was an uneasy alliance but it satisfied both factions with separate spheres of influence. No more. The good news for Texas progressives is that they've

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finally purged the Democratic party of right-wingers and now have it all to themselves. The bad news is that the party is roughly the size of a well-attended kegger. And it promises to stay that way for the next generation.

The change is notable not only for its comprehensiveness but for the rapidity with which it took place. In Texas, the first Republican since Reconstruction took statewide office in 1978. Within 20 years, all 22 statewide offices were held by Republicans. Unbudgeable, decades-old majorities in both houses of the Texas legislature vaporized just as quickly. You can't blame Texas liberals for being disoriented. "There's something about being so concentrated ideologically that makes them more strident than they'd be under other circumstances," Will Lutz, managing editor of a political newsletter called *The Lone Star Report*, told me earlier this month.

"But it doesn't work. You saw it with Ann Richards, who really is the darling of the Austin left. When Bush ran against her in '94, she went after him like they're going after him now: He's a failed businessman, he's tainted by the oil companies, he's a rich kid. She made jokes about his intelligence and his daddy. It didn't work. That sort of thing only works with people who already agree with you."

Republicans learned this lesson themselves, suffering a lengthy, and equally pointless and debilitating, epidemic of Clinton-hating for most of the 1990s, when it bubbled up from the fever swamps of Arkansas and laid waste to vast stretches of the national party. Like Clinton-hating, Bush hatred is the creature of a marginalized mentality—the irritable gesture of the perennial loser. I saw it in action one morning when I was invited to a demonstration staged by Travis County Democrats outside the Austin Club, on Brazos Street downtown. The word was that Tom DeLay—second only to Bush as an object of liberal revulsion—would be appearing at a fundraising luncheon.

First they got the date wrong, then they got the address wrong, but by the time the actual event rolled around, the Democrats had gathered outside the club, sweating under a glazed sun, reasonably confident that at last they had their coordinates right. There were about fifteen of us—several slacker youth, a larger number of middle-aged women with close-cut gray hair, dressed in jeans or wraparound skirts and sensible shoes, and a handful of men in T-shirts showing a large "W" with a red slash through it. A bearded man named Jamie pulled up on a bike, introduced himself, and showed me a painting he had done for the occasion. It was highly abstract, with shards of orange scattered across a field of gray.

"It's more of an Ashcroft painting," he said, shrugging. "But I think it'll do for DeLay. Don't you?"

Assuring him it would, I resumed sweating. The sun was very hot, and several of the women were getting impatient as DeLay's time of arrival came and went. This was to be the party's main "action event" of the day, and they wanted to get it right.

"Who's worse," I asked Jamie, killing time. "DeLay or Bush?"

"Oh, Bush. Ashcroft, DeLay—they're front men. A dime a dozen. Bush is the guy. And we know Bush here in Texas. We've been trying to tell you. All I can say is, 'We told you so.'"

"That's it!" one of the women shouted suddenly. Tired of waiting, she marched to the front door of the Austin Club, opened it, and stepped inside, bullying her way past a pair of Austin businessmen, looking puzzled in their blazers and slacks.

A minute later she marched back out.

"The son of a bitch!" she shouted. "The son of a bitch! The Son. Of. A. Bitch. He was here for breakfast!"

Steeped in anger, inflamed with passion, crippled by incompetence—our national Democrats should hope the Austin contagion doesn't spread much further. ♦

Picture Desk Photos / Jana Birchum / Austin protester, 2003

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Inside the Campaign Cocoon

Bush on the stump

By Matthew Continetti

Fifteen miles west of Denver, halfway up the Rocky Mountain foothills, there is a place that once was called the Garden of Angels. Two red sandstone monoliths shoot up from the hillside at 45-degree angles, towering 300 feet overhead. Stand between them, and you stare into a valley, brown and green and unspoiled. A moment passes, and your eyes adjust, and you see grooves in the hillside below. The grooves are benches, and at the bottom of the hill is a stage.

Welcome to Red Rocks. Since 1906, when magazine publisher John Brisben Walker produced the first concert here, it's been a mecca for musicians. When Bruce Springsteen plays Red Rocks, though, the road to the amphitheater is not lined with protesters. Nor do three buses filled with members of the national press corps, accompanied by police escort, show up to watch. And chances are there aren't snipers in the stones, either, hiding in tiny caves a hundred feet in the air, training their rifles on the crowd below.

But then, even the Boss is not the president of the United States. One day last week, George W. Bush—with his daughter Jenna, former CENTCOM commander Gen. Tommy Franks, Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan, and a host of statewide pols and press and demonstrators in tow—brought his own traveling road show to Red Rocks. The president's band played to a captivated audience: In all, over 10,000 supporters showed up. Many of them arrived hours early, and some stayed for hours afterward. And based on the results of a thoroughly unscientific poll conducted during the rally's closing minutes, combined with the rapturous screams heard during the president's remarks, the visit was an unqualified success.

It was the third stop on a campaign swing that began on October 11 in the isolated oil town of Hobbs, New Mexico, and ended—for me anyway—two days later in the city of Tempe, Arizona. There was a reassuring regularity to all the stops in between. At each rally, Bush was met by a throng of enthusiastic supporters, almost all of them white, young, married, and with small children. Sometimes the families I met had two kids; sometimes three; sometimes more. The children squirmed and made faces while the president spoke, but squealed and clapped hands whenever the audience burst into applause.

At each rally, as the audience waited patiently for the president's armored motorcade to arrive, they listened to the same country music, they said the same prayers, and they waved the same signs: Bush Cheney '04 or This is Bush Country or We Love W. At each rally the national press watched attentively before scurrying back to the filing center, where they phoned and emailed their editors in New York and Washington. And at each rally, once he arrived, the president delivered the same stump speech, with the same inflections, the same gestures, and the same facial expressions, over and over and over again.

And audiences loved it. At Red Rocks, the Broncos' Shanahan introduced Gen. Franks, who introduced the president. Franks, looking oddly out of character in a dark suit and bright blue tie, explained why Bush should be reelected. "I have seen this president, this commander in chief, when the nights were long and the mornings were early and the decisions to be made were hard," Franks said slowly, his Texas drawl stretching out each word. "And you know what I saw? I saw character, I saw courage, and I saw consistency."

The crowd whooped and cheered.

"I saw the character that is necessary," Franks went on. "I saw the character in his eyes that is necessary not to tie, but to win against the terrorists."

More whoops and cheers.

The president took the podium. "I've come back to this beautiful part of our country," he said. Then he paused.

"To ask for the vote," he continued, by way of introduction. He paused again. Since the introductions were

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over, he leaned over the podium, and began what he was really there for.

He was there to hammer his opponent.

The president's physicality on the stump cannot be overstated. Sometimes his whole body tilts on its axis as he lunges forward, his right index finger pointing, jabbing at the air, punctuating each word. Sometimes he grabs both sides of the podium as he talks, gazes at the audience, winks at random people, then turns serious, and makes a fist, and pounds it against the podium. And sometimes he leans back and shrugs, eyes twinkling, his mouth curved into a wide smile, as he tells a joke.

Like this one, from Red Rocks: "I said [to coach Shanahan], you got any suggestions? He said, 'Yeah. Stay on the offense.'"

It was clear Bush had taken Shanahan's advice. About half his stump speech is an attack on Kerry's record, portraying the senator as a big-government liberal who is soft on defense. But that's not Bush's main problem with Kerry. The main problem, Bush says in his stump speech, is that Kerry is disingenuous. "Much as he's strived to obscure it," Bush said at Red Rocks, "on issue after issue, my opponent has shown why he has earned his ranking as the most liberal member of the United States Senate." And: "Several statements he made the other night simply didn't pass the credibility test." And: "With another straight face, he tried to tell Americans that when it comes to his health care plan, 'The government has nothing to do with it.'"

There's more. Bush uses Kerry's legislative record and public statements to show that the Massachusetts senator is a Roman god—specifically, the two-faced Janus. In the media, this line of attack is often caricatured as the "flip-flop" charge, but it is more (dare one say it?) *nuanced* than that. Bush isn't saying Kerry shouldn't be president because he changes positions. He's saying Kerry shouldn't be president because he cannot *choose* a position in the first place: "His plan to raise taxes in the top two income brackets would raise about $600 billion," Bush said at Red Rocks, before drawing a deep breath. "But his spending plan will cost almost four times as much, more than $2.2 trillion." He shook his head, leaned forward again, and then, relishing each syllable, said slowly and loudly: "*You cannot have it both ways*."

The president is all about choosing. He, not John Kerry, is "the real deal." He, not John Kerry, is a leader. Americans may not always agree with him, the president said in his acceptance speech at Madison Square Garden on September 2, but at least they know where he stands. Indeed, it is hard *not* to know where Bush stands. His stump speech is littered with the first-person singular. He begins almost every sentence this way: "I believe" or "I'm proud" or "I want" or "I've led." Even when the president uses the pronoun "we," it's the royal we: "We're not going to let him tax you," he told his audiences last week. "We're going to win in November!"

Yet such use of the first person doesn't strike one as egotistical. Nor is it meant to. It is meant to show the president as comfortable in his own skin, as decisive and strong and authentic, as confident in his ability to lead. It works. If you go to a "Victory 2004" rally, you'll see that the president's vision of himself resonates deeply with his supporters.

But Bush is more than decisive. He is, in his own mind, in his own way, revolutionary. In his stump speech, you hear that while the president embraces new ideas, John Kerry is beholden to worn-out politics, old answers, and outdated modes of thought. In his convention speech, Bush said, "Many of our most fundamental systems—the tax code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training—were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow." He said, "This changed world can be a time of great opportunity for all Americans to earn a better living." But, he added, Kerry is averse to change: "His policies of tax and spend—of expanding government rather than expanding opportunity—are the politics of the past."

Bush's are the policies of the future. He is a transformative president. Just listen to him talk. "Transform" is one of his favorite words. "We're transforming our military," he told the audience at Red Rocks. And later: "I believe in the transformational power of liberty." And later still: "My predecessor"—he was talking about Harry Truman—"and other citizens held to that belief that liberty could transform nations." Liberty transforms people abroad, but it can also transform things at home. "I saw a problem in Medicare," he said. "Medicine was modernizing but Medicare wasn't. . . . So we called people together and modernized Medicare."

The crowds burst into applause. One woman with curly blond hair shrieked so loudly you would have thought she was an extra in a Godzilla movie.

Bush smiled. "We're not going to go back to the old days," he yelled.

It is a curious trope for a Republican president to use, to be sure, particularly for one who says he is a conservative. But it played well among the crowd gathered at Red Rocks last week, just as it played well among the crowd gathered in the World Arena and Ice Hall in Colorado Springs the next morning. The only major difference between the two rallies was that Jenna Bush introduced her father in Colorado Springs. She brought to the job all the, um, rhetorical skill she deployed at the Republican National Convention.

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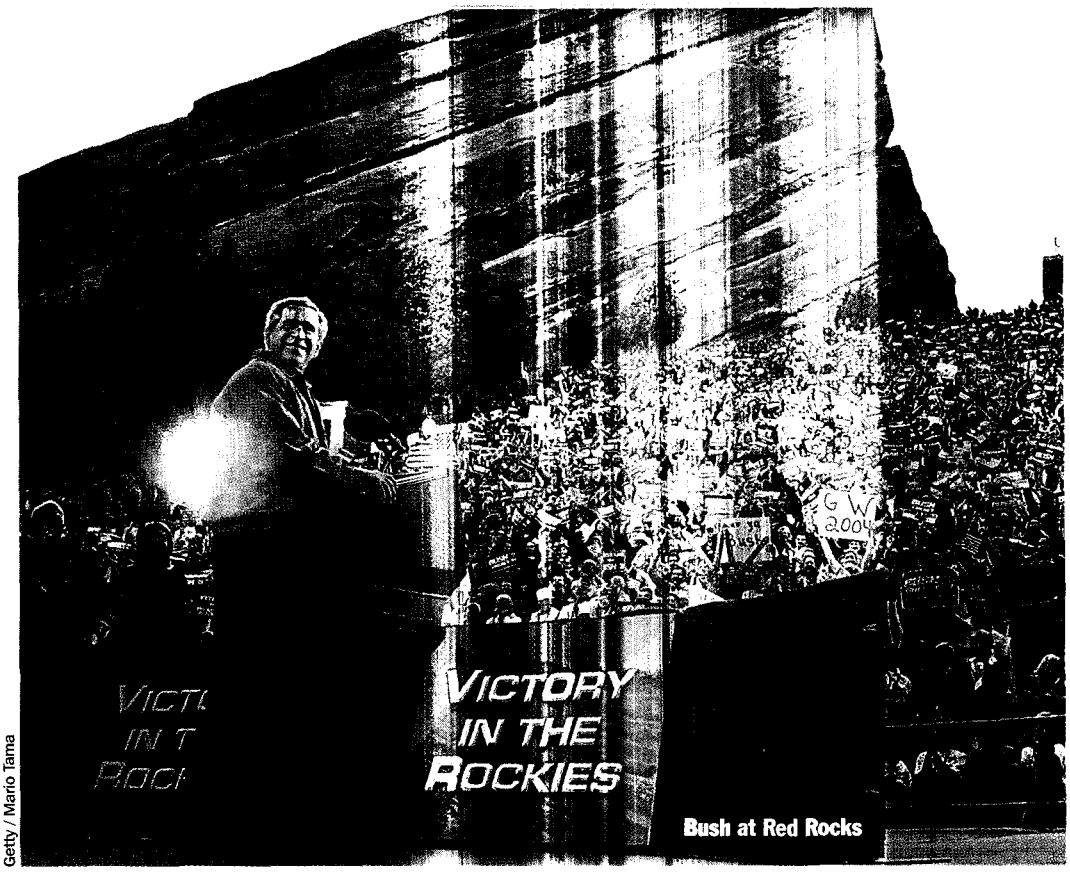
"There's so much energy in this state to reelect my dad," she said. And you should vote for "my dad" for a couple of reasons, mainly because he "made my favorite peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" and "told me I actually looked cute in braces." Also, "My dad is a great president."

Jenna's peroration delighted the men and women in the crowd. Some waved American flags, and others waved four fingers in the air, calling for four more years, but looking oddly like commodities traders at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. For his part, once he took the stage, the president expanded on his theme that he, not John Kerry, is better equipped to lead the country in the future.



Getty / Mario Tama

Bush at Red Rocks

Why? Because of Kerry's record in the past. "We're living in changing times, and that can be unsettling," Bush said. But

> I want you to remember that my opponent has had a record—a record in 20 years in the United States Senate. He's had a record of voting against the weapons systems that helped our country win the Cold War. He had a record—in 1993, after we got the first World Trade Center attack, he voted to cut the intelligence budget by $7.5 billion. See, that's part of his thinking. That's record. That happened.

Bush talked a lot about Kerry's record in Colorado Springs, but not nearly as much as he'd talked about it a week earlier, in a speech he gave in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on October 6. Stung by his poor performance in the first presidential debate, Bush went on the attack, rolling out a laundry list of positions taken and votes cast by Senator Kerry that, when considered as a whole, reveal

> an agenda that is stuck in the thinking and the policies of the past. On national security, he offers the defensive mindset of September the 10th, a global test to replace American leadership, a strategy of retreat in Iraq, and a 20-year history of weakness in the United States Senate. Here at home, he offers a record and an agenda of more taxes and more spending, and more litigation, and more government control over your life.

I remembered the president's Wilkes-Barre speech as I stood on the floor of the arena in Colorado Springs, and watched him grab the podium and narrow his eyes, and heard him say John Kerry's record review "is dangerous, a dangerous way of thinking in the world in which we live," and I thought: *George Bush is not running on his record. He's running on his opponent's.*

And then I thought: *Oh, no. I'm thinking like a member of the White House press corps.*

They are a cynical crowd. Here's one reason why: The president rarely answers questions from the press. He's held fewer solo press conferences than any president in the last 50 years. When reporters accompany the president to events, they are restricted to an area at least 50 feet from him at all times. During my four-day tour with the White House press corps, only one reporter asked Bush a question. It was on October 12, the eve of the third presidential debate, and the president and first lady were leaving Richardson's, a Tex-Mex joint in Phoenix, where they had just had dinner with John and Cindy McCain. A White House pool reporter asked Bush how he felt.

"Full," Bush replied.

The White House senior communications staff are similarly reticent. Earlier on October 12, for example, as Air Force One made its way from Denver to Colorado Springs, Scott McClellan, the White House press secretary, held his morning gaggle with reporters. Here is a typical excerpt:

> McCLELLAN: All right, good morning. You all know what the events are. The president had his briefings at the hotel before we left. So here I am.

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Q: Any new message, any tweaking of the message, at all, in this rally?
McCLELLAN: Well, there usually is these days. I don't rule it in or out at this point. You all will be there to cover it.

And that was that.

So the media are isolated. They are also bored. The events they cover are canned, repetitive, insular. Naturally, they grow bitter, and they end up focusing on slight, irrelevant changes in Bush's language from speech to speech. Sometimes, for example, the president says John Kerry "can run, but he cannot hide." Other times the president says Kerry "can run, but cannot hide *from his record*." And still other times it sounds like the president says Kerry "can run, but can't ride." In Colorado Springs, one magazine writer leapt with excitement when the president mentioned that the tax code, besides being "a complicated mess," is also "a million pages long." "He hasn't used that line in a few days," the writer told me. (The tax code, incidentally, is 17,000 pages long.)

Not even the audience is allowed to ask the president questions. Over the last few weeks, the president's public appearances have focused mainly on his stump speech. He has not held an "Ask President Bush" rally, in which supporters—you guessed it—ask him questions, since October 4. And even then, the questions weren't interesting, so the White House press corps still had nothing to report. The *Washington Post*'s Mike Allen best captured the mood of such events: "During a campaign forum in the Cleveland suburbs last month," he wrote in October, "President Bush was asked whether he likes broccoli, to disclose his 'most important legacy to the American people' and to reveal what supporters can do 'to make sure that you win Ohio and get reelected.'"

The campaign's insistence on this sort of insularity is self-defeating. You see, during events like the ones at Red Rocks and in Colorado Springs, where the audience consists entirely of loyal supporters, the crowd's energy gets Bush fired up. Excited. He raises his voice. He hits the podium. At times it seems like he's on uppers.

The problem is that this is all the candidate learns how to do. When he enters a new situation, this is how he's trained to respond. And it hurt Bush in his initial debates with John Kerry. If you watch the first presidential debate, and then see Bush on the stump, you realize that the president treated the Coral Gables match as if it were a Victory 2004 rally. He was loud and impassioned—emotional states that play well in front of an audience of 10,000 die-hard supporters, but not so well on television. The first 30 minutes of the second presidential debate were no different. Recall, for instance, the following exchange, in which the president went on the attack . . . against the moderator:

"We're going to build alliances," Kerry said. "We're not going to go unilaterally. We're not going to go alone like this president did." Then Kerry paused, and went back to his seat, a satisfied look on his face.

Whereupon the moderator, ABC News's Charles Gibson, said, "Mr. President, let's extend for a minute . . . "

But Bush was already out of his seat. He was steamed. "Let me just—I've got to answer this," he said. He was loud, angry.

Gibson remained calm. "Exactly. And with Reservists being held on duty—"

Bush jumped in again.

"Let me just answer what he just said, about around the world," the president said, walking toward Gibson.

You could tell by his furrowed brow that Gibson was confused. "Well, I want to get into the issue of the backdoor draft—"

But to no avail. "You tell Tony Blair we're going alone," Bush barked. "Tell Tony Blair we're going alone. Tell Silvio Berlusconi we're going alone. Tell Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland we're going alone." He went back to his seat.

A look of defeat spread across Gibson's face.

By the second half of the second debate, however, Bush had stopped yelling at Charlie Gibson. He was more relaxed, particularly when it came to social and domestic issues. The reason for this change was unclear. Whatever the reason, Bush realized that he was at a debate, not a Monster Truck rally. So he let Kerry's tongue-tied answer on abortion speak for itself, saying only, "I'm still trying to decipher that." The line elicited polite chuckles from the audience. He gave a thoughtful answer on the question of stem-cell research, saying that "to destroy life to save life is one of the great ethical issues we face." If Bush had lost the first debate, he was able to stanch the damage by the end of the second.

And by the end of the third, Bush had Kerry on the defensive. In Tempe, the president was calm, comfortable, and smiling. He seemed happy to be debating Kerry, a strong contrast with the first debate. He talked about the senator's record, but differently than he does on the stump. He used humor, for one thing. "Pay go means you pay—and he goes ahead and spends," Bush said. A little earlier, he turned to Kerry, and said, "There's a mainstream in American politics, and you sit on the far left bank."

Kerry, by contrast, was defensive about his health care plan, about his legislative accomplishments in the Senate, and about Social Security. He was defensive about taxes, about same-sex marriage, about education. As he had at

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Red Rocks and Colorado Springs, the president said *he* was the bold visionary, not Kerry. "I think we need to think differently" about Social Security, Bush said. Kerry, on the other hand, came across as the conservative; at one point, talking about the federal budget, he said he wanted to "get back to where we were at the end of the 1990s."

In other words, at last week's debate *Bush* was the progressive.

He was not a culture warrior. Nor is he one on the stump. At Red Rocks and Colorado Springs, at Hobbs, New Mexico, and Phoenix, Arizona, Bush spoke allusively about social issues. He talked about spreading a "culture of life," but never said the word abortion. He talked about "traditional families," but never said the phrase same-sex marriage. In fact, when a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage came up at the third debate, Bush spoke at greater length and with more coherence on the topic than he has all year.

Here's how it happened. The moderator, CBS's Bob Schieffer, asked Bush whether homosexuality is a choice. Bush said he didn't know. "I do know that we have a choice to make in America, and that is to treat people with tolerance and respect and dignity," he said. But "activist judges are actually defining the definition of marriage." And "the surest way to protect marriage between a man and woman is to amend the Constitution."

To which Kerry, echoing his running mate John Edwards, replied, "We're all God's children, Bob. And I think if you were to talk to Dick Cheney's daughter, who is a lesbian, she would tell you that she's being who she was, she's being who she was born as."

It was an odd, off-putting, uncomfortable moment. It was also an illustrative one. What exactly does Mary Cheney have to do with the debate over same-sex marriage? And why did John Kerry take it upon himself to speak on her behalf? In a crass example of electoral cynicism, the Democratic candidate for president went out of his way to remind anyone who might be bothered by it that the president's running mate has a daughter who's gay. And yet this was only one of several paradoxes that surfaced during the presidential debates, and during this campaign as a whole. A gay-baiting Massachusetts Democrat, when you think about it, is just as odd as a conservative Texas Republican who believes the twenty-first century requires "new ways of thinking" and wants to "transform" societies both foreign and domestic. Isn't it?

Maybe not. The candidates and their staffs don't seem to think so, anyway. They don't have time to consider such paradoxes. At the end of the debate, the president and his opponent, wearing matching suits and ties, clasped hands, hugged their families, and went back to their respective hotels. Bush's staff scooped up the traveling press corps, and the next morning the whole merry band boarded planes and took off for new cities and new rallies and new venues, flying high above Arizona's red rocks and deserts, careening on toward this election's unknown end. ♦

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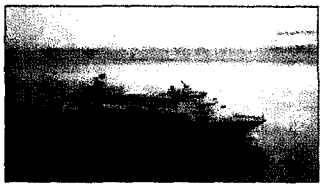

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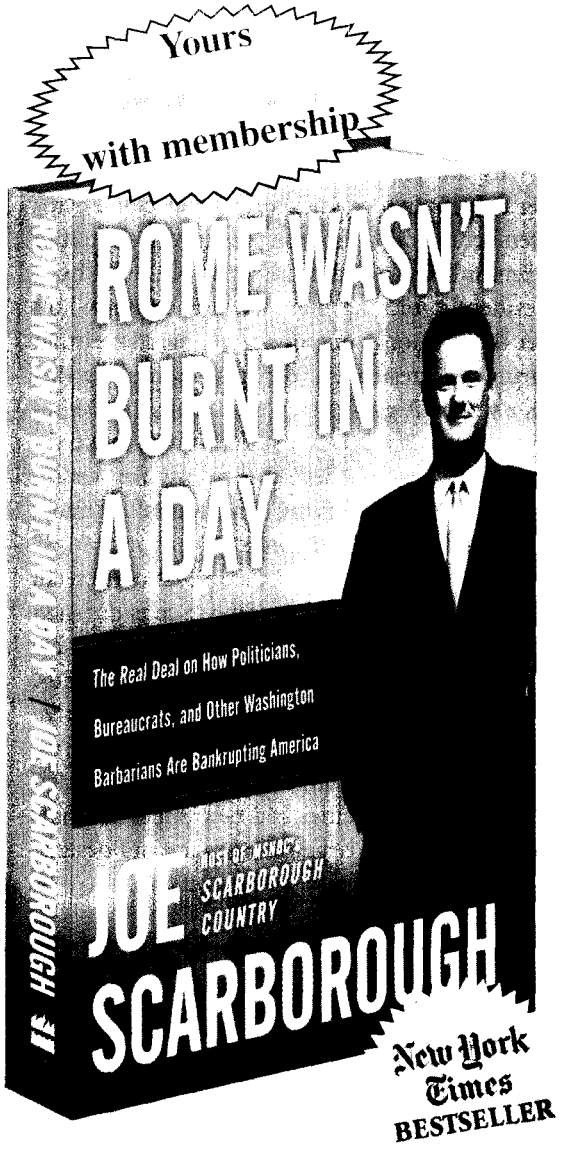
Joe Scarborough takes on the pork barons



"[illegible] time, in a Congress far, far [illegible] Republicans believed in smaller [illegible]. But you wouldn't know it now."

That's what the *Wall Street Journal* said in June 2004. In ***Rome Wasn't Burnt In A Day: The Real Deal on How Politicians, Bureaucrats, and Other Washington Barbarians Are Bankrupting America***, former Congressman Joe Scarborough (host of Scarborough Country) shows why. The proud party of Reagan, says Scarborough, is dead—and has been replaced by a gang of self-serving plutocrats who don't think twice about lining up at the pork trough with just as much gusto as any Democrat ever displayed.

Scarborough shares the fruits of his experience in Congress (which he entered as part of the Republican Revolution of 1994 as a 31-year-old reformer). He shows how Washington truly functions by taking you behind the closed doors of Congress, into Oval Office meetings, onto Air Force One, and deep inside the corridors of power to which few Americans are ever granted access. He recounts what happened to the idealistic conservatives who were elected to Congress with him in 1994.

In doing so, he demonstrates that the rampant spending and uncontrolled government growth that plague our nation today are truly bipartisan problems. He lists hair-raising and harebrained projects that you and I have paid for with our tax dollars: 12 million dollars for a vanity project named the Patrick Leahy War Victims Fund in Vermont; a million dollars to study brown tree snakes; another million dollars to study the Mormon Cricket in Utah; $700,000 for the Silver Ring Thing Museum in Pennsylvania; $300,000 for the Universal Kitchen Design Museum in Iowa; and much more.

Above all, Scarborough provides a series of practical proposals for how this outrageous waste of the taxpayers' money can and must be fixed now—and how the Republican Party can be called back to its principles of small, responsible government.

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A Jewish family in Biala, Poland, ca. 1900. All Photos: CORBIS.

What Yiddish Says

The God-haunted fiction of Isaac Bashevis Singer By JOSEPH EPSTEIN

On a few occasions I have been asked who among the writers of the past half century I thought might be read a hundred years from now. I could think of only Isaac Bashevis Singer—chiefly because he is the single writer of our time who might as easily have been read a hundred years *before* his birth. And yet, most critics prefer not to delve into the reason behind Singer's literary timelessness.

Born in Poland in 1904 and coming to America only in 1935, Singer wrote all his stories in Yiddish and had translators with greater fluency than he. Although his knowledge of English improved greatly over the years, Singer always spoke in a greenhorn's accent. ("It is a rare mark of individuality to be a great writer in a language he speaks so badly," wrote Paul Valéry of Joseph Conrad, who never lost his strong accent, either.)

That Singer wrote in the dying language that is Yiddish makes his case all the more interesting. Three volumes of his stories have now been collected and published in the Library of America. (The only other non-American-born writers in this canonical publishing enterprise are Vladimir Nabokov and Alexis de Tocqueville.) Singer's devotion to Yiddish—the *mameh loshn*, or mother-tongue—was complete. He insisted it has "vitamins other languages haven't got" and claimed that it is "very rich in describing character and personality, though very poor in words for technology." In his Nobel Prize lecture of 1978, he remarked that the language captured "the pious joy, lust for life, longing for the Messiah, patience, and deep appreciation for humanity" of the Yiddish-speaking people among whom he came of age in Poland. And yet, in the same lecture, he claimed *universality* for Yiddish, averring that "in a figurative way Yiddish is the wise and humble language of us all, a frightened and hopeful humanity."

Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in Leoncin, Poland, the son and grandson of rabbis. He grew up in an atmosphere of grinding poverty and conflicting piety. The conflict derived from the continuing argument between Singer's father's mystical tendencies and his mother's more traditional, rationalistic Judaism; the poverty, from Singer's father's refusal to take a Russian-language examination required by Czarist law, so that, despite his considerable learning, he was forced to work as, in effect, a clandestine rabbi serving the poorest of Jews.

The central figure in the Singer household was his mother, Bathsheva, after whom Isaac took his middle name Bashevis. The daughter of a distinguished line of rabbis, a woman of genuine Jewish learning in her own right,

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A Jewish tailor in 1950.

she was, from all reports, a personality of great force. Singer was said to resemble his mother physically—small-boned, blue-eyed, and red-haired—and, some say, temperamentally; and he reverenced her all his days.

The other important figure in Singer's family life was his brother Israel Joshua Singer, himself a writer and for many years one of greater renown than Isaac Bashevis. The elder by eleven years, he wrote novels famous in their day, *Yoshe Kolb* (1933) and *The Brothers Ashkenazi* (1936), and died of a heart attack when he was fifty years old. *The Brothers Ashkenazi* remains a magnificent novel, one in which the villain is no less than the country of Poland and the first book in which I learned, a lesson often repeated, that the one thing the far left and the far right always come around to agree upon is hatred of the Jews. Although Isaac Bashevis would eventually achieve much greater fame than his brother, and although his talent was more various and fecund, he never came near writing a novel as powerful as *The Brothers Ashkenazi.*

In fact, Isaac Bashevis Singer is a great writer in part because of the plentitude of his production. Here he was lucky even in his misfortune. His family's poverty caused the Singers to retreat to the backwaters to live, at one point with his mother's father in the village of Bilgoray, where the intrusions of modernity were few, and later on Krochmalna Street, in the slums of Warsaw, where a buzz of urban tumult played out on the street, which Singer later referred to as "my literary gold mine." In both the rural retreats and the intensely urban setting, the young and always observant Isaac acquired material sufficient to sustain him through a long career. His life in New York, to which he came in 1935, a life lived among the Jewish refugees from Hitler and Stalin, gave him yet more material.

Collected Stories
Gimpel the Fool to the Letter Writer
by Isaac Bashevis Singer
Library of America, 789 pp., $35

Collected Stories
A Friend of Kafka to Passions
by Isaac Bashevis Singer
Library of America, 856 pp., $35

Collected Stories
One Night in Brazil to The Death of Methuselah
by Isaac Bashevis Singer
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Singer came by one of his major themes, the conflict between the religious and the secular life, as part of his birthright. Among Eastern European Jews, this conflict was brought to the foreground by the *Haskalah*, a period of great transition for the Jews of Eastern Europe. A delayed enlightenment, the *Haskalah* caused Western literature, philosophy, and art to impinge on traditional Jewish orthodoxy, a world hitherto contentedly self-enclosed within Torah, Talmud, and the commentaries of the sage rabbis.

As a boy and young man, Singer straddled both worlds. He was sent to a rabbinical seminary, and he spent some time teaching in a yeshiva in a Jewish village, but he did both with less than passionate enthusiasm. The distraction was his brother Israel Joshua, who was, so to say, *Haskalah* all the way. He had lived briefly in Russia, saw the Russian revolution at firsthand, and had an instinctive revulsion for the lives of the *shtetl* Jews; in a memoir, I.J. Singer, describing these lives, refers to "the stink of religion," an unforgettable phrase. Living with the unrelenting arguments between his older brother and their parents, Singer decided, at least at the time, that "all his arguments were very strong, while the arguments of my parents seemed to me weak."

Through his brother, Singer got a job working as a proofreader for a Yiddish magazine, and fell in with the Jewish bohemian circles of 1920s Warsaw, a city that was then roughly a third Jewish. He began to publish articles and stories; he was a young man with many romantic entanglements. A relationship with a woman of revolutionary spirit produced a son, Singer's only child. The mother of the boy took him off to Russia and then to Israel. Singer himself emigrated to the United States, where his brother had arranged a job for him on the Yiddish-language *Jewish Forward.*

For something like an eight-year stretch, Singer, this most productive of writers, felt himself blocked after his arrival in the United States, producing only driblets of negligible journalism. Some claimed that the shadow of his more famous brother eclipsed him and that he only began to come into his own at his brother's death in 1943. More likely, he was stunned by the sheer force and energy of America; he found American character incomprehensible. He felt torn from his old world and his linguistic roots: He had a smattering of Hebrew, Polish, and German, but spoke only Yiddish. He was already thirty and quite without prospects of any kind. "In reality," as he told Richard Burgin, in *Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer*, "I considered

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myself a has-been writer, an ex-writer, a writer who lost both the power and the appetite for writing."

The writing of his family-chronicle novel *The Family Moskat* got him back on track; the fact that the novel was being serialized in the *Jewish Forward*, with the pressure of a new chapter required every week, kept him there. The book was eventually translated and published in English by Alfred A. Knopf, though originally in a much-cut version. In 1952, *Partisan Review* published his story "Gimpel the Fool," in a translation said to have been done in a few hours by Saul Bellow, and soon after the New York intellectuals took him up, though he never took them up. Not long afterward Cecil Hemley, the chief editor and publisher of the small and distinguished Noonday Press and one of those self-effacing friends of literature, arranged for a translation of Singer's first novel, *Satan in Goray*, and brought out a volume of his stories. When Farrar Straus & Giroux acquired Noonday Press, Hemley took Singer along. In 1967, he made a *New Yorker* connection, becoming the first writer the magazine published regularly in translation. Eleven relentlessly productive years later, Singer won the Nobel Prize.

At first, a serious attempt was made to sell Singer as a modernist writer. Some claimed that religion formed no more than a background in his fiction, and that his novels and stories worked out only that modern trinity of the Freudian id, ego, and superego. Others claimed that "there's a religious dimension to his writing that is remarkably modern." The critic Morris Dickstein said that Singer "had a vision of life that promoted the idea that we should live all we can and live out our desires, even though it may lead us to be kind of shadows who are just dancing around in a void. Both a gloomy, grim, dark philosophy at the same time—one that had to do with a very positive view of living in the moment, and particularly about living sexually." If this reading were true, Isaac Bashevis Singer would be a much lesser writer than I believe he is.

But, then, Singer and sex is a subject unto itself. In various interviews, Singer has said that the best story is a love story. Oddly, he himself tended to write not about love but about passion, which is far from the same thing. As a character in his "The Beard" tells the story's Singer-like narrator, "You write about love, but you don't know what it is. Forgive me, but you describe passion, not love, which makes sacrifices and ripens over the years." Perhaps the best critic of Singer was Singer himself, in such squibs provided in his own stories.

Religious zeal is another realm that fascinated Singer. In his story "Passions," he describes a man who one night leaves his little house in the village of Radoszyce in Poland and walks all the way to Jerusalem; another man, a tailor, owing to a contretemps in synagogue, enters into a wager that requires him to become a serious scholar within a year; still another man decides to treat every day as if it were Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement: "Everything can become a passion, even serving God," is the story's final sentence.

But the main passion on display in Singer's stories and novels is usually the sexual one. His characters are inevitably swept up in the pure heat of desire, whose first consequence is to cause them to abandon duty to family, to community, above all to God. They throw away everything in the blind certainty that their pleasure in the objects of their passion will endure forever. The sheer sexiness of Singer's writing is one of the many things that infuriated his fellow refugee Yiddish writers, though not so much, one suspects, as did the envy they felt at his immense success in America.

Singer himself, a small, alopeciac man with striking blue eyes who tended to dress in the greenhorn style of mismatched colors and small outrageous touches—one of my favorites was his apparent weakness for polka-dot shirts—was nonetheless, by all accounts, what used to be known as "a real ladies man" and what continues to be known as a "chaser."

Everyone has a story about Singer's activities in this line. My own derives

Isaac Bashevis Singer

from a woman who told me that Singer came up to her, in an empty college auditorium an hour or so before a reading he was to give, to ask if she was Jewish and, if so, where her family was from. She replied that she was indeed Jewish and her family was from Bialystok. Singer told her that he knew a great deal about Bialystok and would like to know more about her family. He suggested they meet after the reading.

He had been given two rooms in the building in which he had earlier read. In the sitting room there were a couch, a few chairs, a table upon which was a bowl filled with fruit. They sat on opposite ends of the couch. Singer asked the woman—she was then in her thirties, he perhaps in his late sixties—to tell him what she knew about her family history. She recounted what little knowledge she had for perhaps four or five minutes, when Singer, leaning toward her, made his move:

"Do you mind," he asked, in his immigrant's accent, "if I kiss you?"

"Oh, Mr. Singer," she said, "I'm very honored you would ask, but I've just begun a marriage and I don't want anything to go wrong, I hope you understand." (To me she said the thought of popping into bed with him "would

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have been like sleeping with my grandfather.")

Singer put up a hand, palm outwards. "No, no, no," he said. "Don't vorry." And, pointing to the table in the center of the room, he added, "Please, take some fruit to your husband."

The point of this story is not its salaciousness, for it hasn't any. The point is to recount that Singer's knowledge of sin was not entirely theoretical. He was apparently one of those seducers who proceed on an actuarial basis, who tries all women on the statistical assumption that he might just strike fire and accepts defeat with the same equanimity as success. He was a married man, and if ever one wishes to see a face precisely describable as long-suffering, one cannot do better than gaze upon a photograph of his wife Alma. When Alma left her husband to marry Singer she also left her two young children, about whom, in the Singer biographies, one hears nothing further. Singer was parted from his own son for twenty years without, so far as is known, any strenuous attempts on his part to get in touch with the boy. Janet Hadda, one of Singer's biographers, and not an unsympathetic one, remarks tersely: "He was a negligent husband, an unfit father, and he knew it."

Not all the sin described in Singer's stories is sexual; sometimes it has to do with worshipping idols or following false messiahs, or being too zealous in one's worship. Of his story "Pigeon Feathers," the novelist Francine Prose has remarked on "its insistence on looking beneath the surface pieties of religion to examine the unruly hungers, obsessions, rages, griefs, and mysteries that faith and culture address." I don't happen to think Singer thought religion, at least the religion of Judaism, had any pieties that he would care to call "superficial."

Isaac Bashevis Singer was a great literary artist, in the pure-storyteller division. But many critics who admire him are not quite ready to take his subjects seriously or accept his themes, preferring instead to find the modern note in him. In his story "The Briefcase," the Singer-like narrator is to give a lecture titled "Is There a Future for the Literature of the Subconscious and the Absurd?" In the story the lecture is never delivered, but elsewhere Singer has supplied the answer to the question posed in its title, and that answer is No. Insofar as modernism in literature was connected with stream of consciousness, experiments in style, or the attempt to penetrate further in the realm of depth psychology through literature, Singer eschewed the entire enterprise. He thought Joyce's *Ulysses* "almost boring," never read *The Sound and the Fury*, and thought little of Samuel Beckett. Believing literature is an art without a history of progress, he thought the best novels and short stories were, with very few exceptions, written in the nineteenth century. He was non- if not anti-modernist, above all in holding that literature and culture would never replace religion; nor did he for a moment feel they deserved to do so.

For a man who claimed to care very little for style, Singer wrote wonderfully well. His English prose is winningly rhythmical, the rhythm playing out most attractively over the length of single paragraphs. He produced strong novels—*Satan in Goray*, *The Magician of Lublin*, *Enemies: A Love Story* are among the best of them—but his real mastery was in the short story. Four or five sentences into a story, and he has you hooked. He knew where life's dramas lay, and he provided an endless cast of characters to work them out. He was in possession of all the perfect details required to make his stories live. No other writer could get one into a story more quickly. Here is the opening paragraph of "The Beard":

> That a Yiddish writer should become rich, and in his old age to boot, seemed unbelievable. But it happened to Bendit Pupko, a little man, sick, pockmarked, with one blind eye and a game leg.

And here is the opening of "Sam Palka and David Vishover":

> Sam Palka sat on the sofa—stocky, a tuft of white hair on each side of his bald head, his face red, with bushy brows and bloodshot eyes that changed from pale blue to green to yellow. A cigar stuck out between his lips. His belly protruded like that of a woman in late pregnancy. He wore a navy-blue jacket, green pants, brown shoes, a shirt with purple stripes, and a silk tie on which was painted the head of a lion. Sam Palka himself looked to me like a lion which by some magic had turned into a rich man in New York, a Maecenas to Yiddish writers, a supporter of the Yiddish theater, president of an old-age home in the Bronx, the treasurer of a society that supported orphans in Israel.

Once presented with these Pupkos and Palkas, one wants to know what Singer will do with them. Extraordinary things, it turns out, but none of it would have worked if Singer hadn't understood that all good fiction is anchored in interesting character. "Something attracted me to that playful little man," he writes about a character named Liebkind Bendel in the story "The Joke." "Perhaps it was because I couldn't fathom him. Every time I thought I knew him some new whim popped up." Singer knew that character is endless in the richness of its variety, even if his characters come chiefly from the closely circumscribed world of Eastern European Jewry and those survivors of Stalin and Hitler who settled chiefly in New York, though also in Buenos Aires and a few other world capitals.

To evince an interest in character is, of course, to show an interest in human nature, a subject on which, despite the best efforts of science and social science, we remain in the same centuries-long state of high ignorance. For Isaac Bashevis Singer every human being was an exception who proved no rule. That ought to be the credo of every artist. Nor was fate, the mysterious chess game of life, any more easily understood. Explanations requiring elaborate abstractions leading onto clichés, a taste for which Singer found strong in Americans, only made things worse.

Philosophy did not, in Singer's view, make them much better. As a younger man, he read a great deal of philosophy. He much admired Spinoza and Schopenhauer, and called the latter "a beautiful writer, a sharp observer of

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human affairs." But the limits of philosophy for Singer were too strictly marked, and philosophy itself, as he told an interviewer, "a kind of learning in which you really have to believe." Nor did philosophy speak to all the mysteries of life that beset Singer and with which he besets many of his most interesting characters. One among them, Hertz Grein, in *Shadows on the Hudson*, himself a former student of philosophy, claims that he went into a "field that has been bankrupt from the start—philosophy has been dead for two hundred years....The riddle grows greater, not smaller, and there's absolutely no way to solve it. It's hopeless."

Many who have written about Isaac Bashevis Singer's fiction underscore the point that he writes about a world that has disappeared, by which of course they mean the world of pre-Holocaust Jewry. "They had perished in the ghettoes or concentration camps or had died in Russia of hunger, typhoid fever, and scurvy," reads a sentence from the story "The Mentor," and it could have been inserted in many another of Singer's stories with a modern setting.

In "Pigeons" Singer wrote the most beautiful story I know about the Holocaust. Not surprisingly, it does not take on the subject directly but symbolically. The story has to do with one Professor Eibeschutz, a scholar who has taken to feeding the pigeons on the street below his apartment. He tells his Polish maid Tekla that doing so is more important to him than going to synagogue. "God is not hungry for praise," he reasons, "but the pigeons wait each day from sunrise to be fed. There is no better way to serve the Creator than to be kind to his creatures." One recalls here that, when asked why he had turned vegetarian, Singer said that he did it not for his own but for the chicken's sake.

Like many another Singer character, the professor tends to shift into *sub species aeternitatis*, to ponder the meaning of the universe in the light of eternity. He recalls a passage in the Talmud in which Jews are likened to pigeons. "The pigeon, like the Jew, thrives on peace, quietude, and good will." He also does not mind indulging in teleology, or the consideration of designs and ends in the universe. "It was not easy to have faith in God's benevolence," he thinks, "but God's wisdom shone in each blade of grass, each fly, each blossom and mite."

One day, while out feeding his pigeons, the elderly professor is set upon by a gang of anti-Semitic Polish thugs, and struck in the head by a rock. The injury results in his taking to his bed, where he withers and soon dies. The pigeons, in flight, follow the professor's hearse to the cemetery: "their wings, alternating between sun and shadow, became red as blood and then dark as lead." The story ends on this splendid paragraph:

> The following morning broke autumn-like and drab. The skies hung low and rusty. The smoke of the chimneys dropped back, gathering on the tile roofs. A thin rain fell, prickly as needles. During the night someone had painted a swastika on the professor's door. Tekla came out with a bag of feed, but only a few pigeons flew down. They pecked at the food hesitantly, glancing around as if afraid to be caught defying some avian ban. The smell of char and rot came up from the gutter, the acrid smell of imminent destruction.

Which brings me round to the question with which I began: Why I believe that Isaac Bashevis Singer is the only writer of the past fifty years likely to be read with the same interest a hundred years from now. The answer, I believe, is not that Singer is a marvelous storyteller, which he was; nor because his *oeuvre* presents the most complete record of *Ostjuden* life before it was obliterated by the Nazis, which it does. No, I think that Singer's fiction will continue to live because he placed his powerful talent in the service of a great theme: the continuing drama of salvation, or finding acceptance in the eyes of God based on the way that one has lived.

A street in Warsaw, 1938.

This drama of individual salvation was once played in the mind of nearly everyone, from kings to peasants. The Enlightenment and all that followed from it has gone a long way to muffle it. But not for everybody, not for lots of intelligent people who cannot find their answers to life's deepest puzzles in philosophy or science—and distinctly not for Isaac Bashevis Singer.

I do not profess to report on the state of Singer's soul. Apart from his literary gifts, he seems not at all Godly and not exactly God-fearing. Perhaps "God-haunted" describes him best. The question of the existence of God, His design, His meaning, why He allowed suffering, such things were never far from Singer's mind. He claimed to believe in God, to have "made peace with human blindness and God's permanent silence, but they give me no rest." He also claimed to feel "a deep resentment against the Almighty," in good part owing to His permitting the Holocaust, in lesser part for being a silent God,

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revealing "Himself in very, very small doses, yet showing very little evidence of His mercy."

But, more important, Singer was able to revivify the old drama of finding acceptance before God. His most powerful characters do so by acting with a benevolent, wise simplicity: characters such as Gimpel in "Gimpel the Fool," Akhsa in "A Crown of Feathers," the magician in *The Magician of Lublin*, and many others. Reformed sinners, simple good souls, some who turn their backs on the world, others who struggle earnestly to understand the meaning of life, all in different ways are put to the test, are players in the drama of individual salvation.

What makes Isaac Bashevis Singer's fiction so immensely alive is that its author understood that nothing has successfully replaced this drama, with its sense that one's actions matter, that they are being judged in the highest court of all, and that the stakes couldn't be greater. No contemporary human drama has been devised that can compare or compete with the drama of salvation, including the various acquisition dramas: those of acquiring pleasure, money, power, fame, knowledge, happiness on earth in any of its forms.

Nor can the drama of progress in understanding the universe promised by science. As Hertz Grein in *Shadow on the Hudson*, a character who has fallen away from the religion of his fathers, and one of Singer's questers, reflects: "What was the universe as Einstein or Eddington conceived it? A lump of clay packed with blind atoms rushing backward and forward, hurling themselves feverishly about." In the way of personal drama, the best that science provides is that exceedingly dull, altogether predictable three-part scenario: life, death, and certain oblivion.

Meanwhile, Isaac Bashevis Singer, in a thoroughly secularized age, through the power of storytelling, can still persuade his readers that other possibilities exist and that life is not without meaning. Which is why his work will still live when that of the professionally sensitive, the socially engaged, and the literary trick-shot artists of our time is long forgot. ♦

Right of Hollywood

The conservatives try their hand at movie making.

BY ANDREW LEIGH

West Hollywood

The Pacific Design Center is a modern architectural icon, a massive shard of cobalt glass looming over West Hollywood. "The blue whale," as locals call it, houses showrooms for some of Southern California's most overpriced interior designers. But on the first weekend in October, a tiny corner of the complex served as the gathering place for the unlikeliest of Hollywood displays: the Liberty Film Festival.

For a Hollywood event, this conservative film festival was remarkably spartan: no lavish parties with ice sculptures, no fountains of champagne, no sushi. Indeed, no food at all. But the lobby outside the theater auditorium buzzed with busily networking Hollywood wannabes, has-beens, and civilians. (Pure civilians are rare in L.A. However distant their day job, most everybody has a script or headshot tucked in the bottom drawer of the modular desk in their office cubicle.)

Govindini Murty—the festival's cofounder, an actress and writer whose cofounder is her husband, Jason Apuzzo, a director and writer—said they whipped together this Sundance for conservatives in about three months. A think tank called the Foundation for Free Markets cosponsored the event but didn't have the kind of money studios regularly pony up for even the premiere of a David Spade movie. Most of these films had appeared a few weeks earlier at the American Film Renaissance in Dallas, which proudly (and properly, as far as I know) dubbed itself "the first conservative film festival in the country." You know that the conservative filmmaking community has come of age when you start hearing dark whispers of infighting between sub-subgroups.

What people at the Liberty Film Festival seemed to relish more than the films themselves was the opportunity to declare to the world—or at least the people at the festival—that they are conservatives and proud of it. At times the lobby resembled another popular Hollywood institution, the AA meeting: "Hello, my name's Bob." "Hi, Bob!" "I'm . . . I'm a conservative!" One woman told me in a sudden spasm of frankness, "I used to work as a writer for NPR," shaking her head in disbelief. "But I turned conservative two years ago. I could never let anybody else know."

It's no accident the organizers opened the festival with a comical short film, *Republican Jew*, produced by an entity calling itself "A Career Suicide Production." But not everybody feared being exposed. Ted Hayes, who said he is "the only black homeless activist in America who is a conservative Republican," held court in one corner of the lobby, his Rastafarian hat and dreadlocks standing out in the otherwise fairly buttoned-down (for Los Angeles) crowd.

Many attendees were what David Zucker, producer of the *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun* movies, called "September 12th Republicans." Andrew Breitbart, coauthor of *Hollywood Interrupted* and a panelist in a discussion entitled "You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again," had the audience howling as he spoke of his hunger to meet fellow Hollywood conservatives: "I need a support group. When I find another [conservative], I just want to hang on to that person. I want to take them home and stay up with them until four

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in the morning, until my wife drags me away."

Liberals who flocked to see Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* report that more than the film itself, they were exhilarated by the communal experience of sitting in an auditorium filled with likeminded people who all cheered and booed at the same things. So, too, but in reverse, at the Liberty Film Festival. Attendees loudly jeered whenever a liberal icon such as Bill Clinton or Ted Kennedy appeared on-screen, and they energetically applauded every on-screen Republican. "It was thrilling to be in an audience that would applaud when Ed Meese was on the screen," said Douglas Urbanski, a prominent producer and talent manager who appeared on the panel with Breitbart.

"It was very emotional. I had women coming up to me with tears in their eyes," co-organizer Murty told me. "There is an enormous public out there who feel their views have been despised, who've had their patriotism ridiculed," Murty said. "It was such a relief for everybody to have other like-minded individuals to talk to."

As for the films themselves, they often seemed an afterthought. Many of them approached their subject-matter from an almost purely rational standpoint, trying to reason with their audience rather than to move them. Several were nothing more than a parade of talking heads and some stock footage, coming across more as a segment of C-SPAN than a feature film. These may play well with the wonk crowd and diehard Fox News viewers. But film is a visceral medium, and too many of the filmmakers failed to take advantage of its enormous potential to reach the gut of its audience. *In the Face of Evil*, the film in which Reagan's pugnacious attorney general briefly appears, was one notable exception. Two years in the making, it had the benefit of the longest lead-time of any film exhibited, and it was the most polished entry.

It was also the most epic in scope, covering the forty-year history of Ronald Reagan's struggle against communism. Through a concert of imagery, music, and language, it displayed a level of emotional depth that eluded most of the other entries. Rather than make a traditional documentary, writer and director Stephen K. Bannon gave his material the structure of a fictional narrative film, including a plot and a character arc. "You have to find a way to give your audience access," he said. "I approached this as a horror film. I said, 'Let's set up the monsters first,'" by which he meant communism, fascism, and the other fatal -isms of the twentieth century, or what the film calls "The Beast." *In the Face of Evil* is based on the book *Reagan's War* by Peter Schweizer. Bannon urged filmmakers to mine conservative books for good stories. "There's a lot of great literary material out there," Bannon said. "It all comes down to great storytelling."

A scene from Stephen K. Bannon's *In The Face of Evil*.

Michael Moore cast a broad shadow across the festival. Four of the twelve original feature-length films were direct responses to his work. And most of the others were inspired by his style and attitude. "Michael Moore is sort of the godfather of this festival," quipped film critic Michael Medved, who introduced a showing of *The Ten Commandments* to close the festival. "Michael Moore is the best propagandist since Goebbels," contended Urbanski, who, in one of those only-in-Hollywood coincidences, actually used to be Moore's manager.

Two of the festival's films tackled Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* head-on. *Celsius 41.11*—"the temperature at which the brain begins to die"—was coproduced by Citizens United. *Confronting Iraq* was brought to you by the good folks at Accuracy in Media. Both films are essentially talking-head vehicles that trot out one pundit after another to shoot down the various claims and contentions of Moore's opus. *Celsius 41.11* features the likes of Charles Krauthammer, Mansoor Ijaz, Michael Ledeen, and Fred Barnes. And nearly every pro-war pundit who isn't in *Celsius 41.11* can be found in *Confronting Iraq*: Victor Davis Hanson, Bernard Lewis, Christopher Hitchens, Frank Gaffney, and so on.

While it is heartening to see them take Moore to task for his many inaccuracies, these films address Moore on a rational level. But Moore's case isn't rational. When he shows Lila Lipscomb (the grieving mother of a soldier who died in Iraq in a helicopter accident) in a tight shot with an American flag fluttering overhead and the Washington Monument in the background, and she sobs, "I finally have a place to put all my pain and all my anger," we're not in the world of CNN; we're in a Lifetime movie.

Lionel Chetwynd, the creator of *Celsius 41.11*, agreed that many of the films, including his own, dropped the

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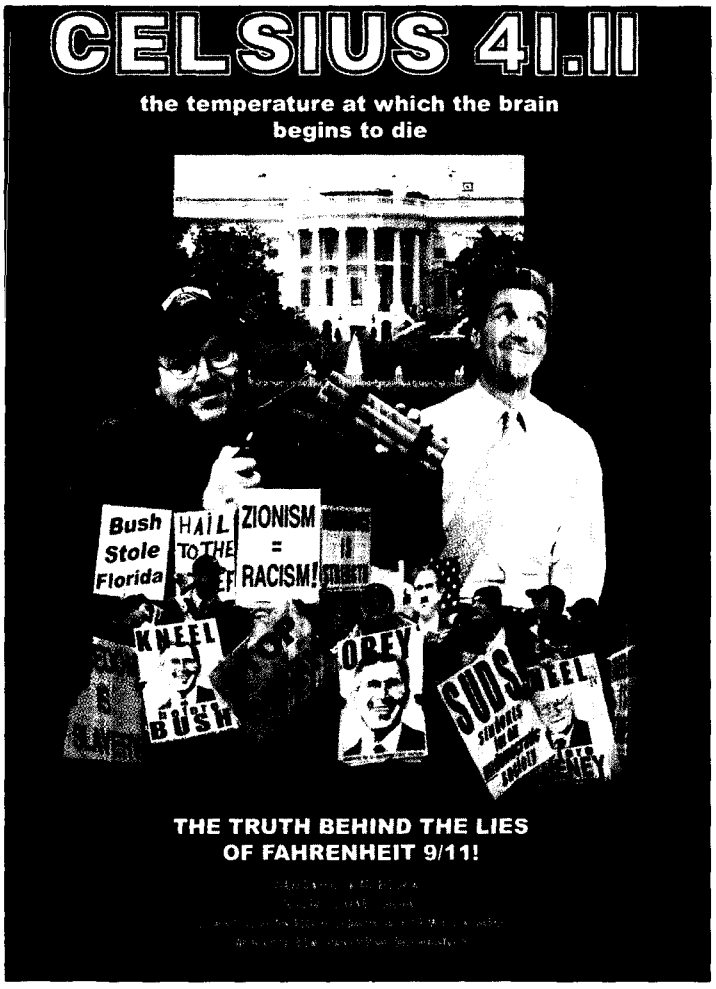

ball in the field of emotion. But the Oscar-nominated screenwriter didn't have the luxury of time that Bannon enjoyed. Instead of two years, Chetwynd had just seven weeks to make his movie, from start to finish. With a long list of impressive credits, including *The Hanoi Hilton* and *Ike*, Chetwynd was the most distinguished filmmaker to exhibit at the festival. Though it seemed an impossible task—to start making a movie in the middle of the summer, take on all of Moore's major arguments, and complete it in time to be widely seen before the election—he and his team pulled it off. And under the circumstances, they did an admirable job.

The festival's two other films to tackle Michael Moore were probably the hottest tickets of the weekend: radio talk-show host Larry Elder's *Michael and Me* and newcomer Michael Wilson's *Michael Moore Hates America*. These two have much in common: Both filmmakers are libertarians making their first feature-length movie, they each focus on Moore's previous film, *Bowling for Columbine*, and each adopted a more intimate, personal approach, to some extent paralleling Moore's folksy style.

Elder's documentary is a little less polished but makes up for it with flashes of humor and poignancy and remains focused, concerned entirely with the Second Amendment and gun-control issues. Wilson's film ranges wider, dealing with issues of economic freedom and, most intriguingly, the ethics of documentary-filmmaking, spotlighting the techniques Moore uses to deceive his audience through interviews with some of his "victims." Edgier than the others, Wilson's work will undoubtedly hold the most appeal for younger audiences.

Both Urbanski and Medved singled out videographer Evan Maloney as one who displayed real potential. For more than a year, Maloney has been posting his popular digital-video shorts on his website *BrainTerminal.com*. He specializes in exposing the inanities of the antiwar left, especially at "peace" rallies. The results are alternately hilarious and frightening. Maloney is presently making *Brainwashing 101*, a feature-length documentary about political correctness and speech codes at college campuses around the country. He previewed the half-completed work-in-progress at the festival, and even in this rough state it proved compelling.

But will any of it matter? "Among the conservative movement there's been almost a contempt for the movie industry," Medved observed. "Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley never took it seriously. But young people growing up in this movie-saturated culture understand its importance." And yet, many of the festival's films were far too drab to appeal to a wide audience. "The entertainment factor is really crucial," Medved insisted. "It's been such a long time since people have tried to blend conservative messages with entertainment value."

Tired of banging their heads against the studio gates, some advocate creating an alternative to the Hollywood studio system. "We can create an alternative infrastructure," Breitbart argued. After all, conservatives have done it before in publishing, the Internet, and radio. With the advent of digital video cameras, DVDs, and computer editing, the costs of making a digital movie have plummeted to near-zero. Apuzzo and Murty, the festival organizers, exhibited a micro-budget noir thriller, *Terminal Island*, which they made for less than the price of a six-year-old Honda Civic.

But others opposed the creation of what Chetwynd disparaged as "a conservative filmmaking ghetto." Following that route, he argued, "means accepting that you don't belong in the mainstream." One would think that if anything would convince the studios of the commercial possibilities of conservative film, it would be the phenomenal success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ*. But so far the studios appear to cede the field to independent Christian film companies.

Political nonprofits generally raise more money when their side is out of power, as passions grow more fervid and activists get more active. If John Kerry does manage to win on November 2, one repercussion may be, ironically, a real flowering of conservative film. In either case, dueling documentaries from both sides are here to stay. For their part, Murty and Apuzzo are already planning next year's follow-up, which they predict, in true Hollywood huckster fashion, will be bigger and better. "A lot of people told me they were inspired to go out and make their own movies," Murty says. "I say to them, 'Go and make your movie, and we'll show it.'" ♦

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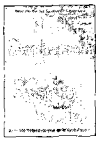
Books in Brief



***The System of the World* by Neal Stephenson (William Morrow, 944 pp., $27.95).** This is the final volume of Stephenson's ambitious Baroque Cycle, which began last year. Through more than 2,500 pages, the trilogy weighs modernity in the balance and finds it wanting—and goes back to its origins to find the cause.

Set largely in England and the Continent in the first years of the eighteenth century, Stephenson's saga relates its characters' attempts to bring on a new System of the World, one in which English classical liberalism offers an alternative to the centralized government the French are perfecting. This new System will allow the people some say in how they are governed, and it welcomes economic, scientific, and technological advances. It seems to have arisen organically, built up by "the ineffable workings of Money," but an opponent sees it as "truly a monster, an abomination, only possible because of the unnatural distortions that Money has wreaked on the world."

Stephenson is fair to all sides, though he clearly supports the Whigs, and he is careful to note that the new system inevitably failed—primarily because, as one character notes, the modern doctrines of science, and the metaphysics behind them, encourage people "to question the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the authority of the Church, the premise that we have souls endowed with Free Will."

The only solution, Stephenson suggests, is to recognize both science and religion as true, which can be done only through a saving act of faith, exemplified in one character's redemption through the taking of the Eucharist. With a plot as complex and satisfying as that of *Tom Jones*, and a strong grasp of the issues and history involved, *The System of the World* provides an imaginative and intellectually sophisticated conclusion to Stephenson's magnum opus.

—S.T. Karnick

***Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda* by John Keegan. (Knopf, 387 pp., $30).** Keegan's seventeenth book is singularly apposite in both timing and subject. This lucid study is an attempt to answer what would seem a simple question: How useful is intelligence in a war? In answer, Keegan presents case studies, starting in the age of Admiral Nelson (when the difficulty was acquiring timely information at all) and ending with al Qaeda (when the sheer volume of intelligence threatens to swamp its value).

In the end, Keegan decides, "victory is an elusive prize, bought with blood rather than brains. Intelligence is the handmaiden, not the mistress, of the warrior." Far from applauding the dashing, romantic spy of fiction, he says flatly that treason is an intrinsically repulsive activity. Still, Keegan doesn't hold all the men who spy for their country entirely in contempt. He feels the British developed over some two centuries a kind of philosophy of secret warfare in which duplicity and the heroic ethic are wed. He commends that British tradition, largely formed in the days of the Empire, in which local warriors and young officer-sportsmen who had learned the language and adopted the costume mingled harmoniously with considerable advantage to their motherland.

Keegan opens his case studies with a quotation from the Duke of Wellington—"No war can be conducted successfully without early and good intelligence"—followed by one from George Washington, a near contemporary, who agreed: "The necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further argued." Keegan whips back to Alexander the Great, then to the pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty, and then again on to Julius Caesar. He makes the point that there was little change throughout the five centuries of Rome's greatness. Reconnaissance throughout this time was by hearing and sight, communication by word of mouth or written dispatch. And so it would remain in the world for another 1,500 years.

Real-time intelligence has always been hard to acquire. In the mid-eighteenth century, the French general Maurice de Saxe commented on the importance of observing how the sun's rays fell on swords and bayonets, "if the rays are perpendicular, it means that the enemy is coming at you; if they are broken and infrequent, he is retreating." Wellington in India came to depend on and develop the system of the harkaras, taken from the Moghul rulers, allying the writing skills and knowledge of the learned classes with the athletic skills of tribal and low-caste people. Keegan adds that this form of long-distance message-running endured well into the 1920s, and the Indian appetite for news may well have made India the largest and only real democracy in the Third World precisely because of its citizens' thirst for information.

And yet, his case studies include the German airborne descent on Crete in May 1942—which demonstrates how even the best intelligence will not avail if the defense is too weak to profit by it. The campaign of Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah and Napoleon's Mediterranean campaign are examples of war conducted without the benefit of signal intelligence. Keegan concludes: "A wise decision would be that intelligence, while generally necessary, is not a sufficient for victory," and, at last: "Foreknowledge is no protection against disaster. Finally only force counts."

—Cynthia Grenier

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"If we do the work that we can do in this country, the work that we will do when John Kerry is president, people like Christopher Reeve are going to walk, get up out of that wheelchair and walk again."
—John Edwards at an Iowa rally, October 11, 2004

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New York Times

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2005

KERRY: CURES ACTUALLY MEANT FOR 'PRACTICAL AILMENTS'

Cure for Toenail Fungus Said to be Imminent

By DONALD G. McNEIL Jr.

WASHINGTON, April 25—After three months of biomedical setbacks, President John Kerry revealed today that the "miraculous cures" both he and Vice President John Edwards touted during the 2004 election were actually intended for "more practical ailments" such as "itchy, dry, flaky scalp, yellow toenails, gingivitis, and incontinence." Appearing on "Meet the Press," Kerry remarked to host Tim Russert, "Not every American enjoys a nice, full head of shiny hair. Mine would be as white as Barbara Bush's if I didn't occasionally color it. But it looks so natural no one can tell. By the way Tim, are you gellin'? Because not every American is gellin'."

With regard to Irritable Bowel Syndrome, the president vowed to fight "a more sensitive war on IBS." He went on, "During the first three months of my administration, we have made great strides on rabies, scabies, cooties, consumption, and the shingles. The First Lady's cure for arthritis is now available over the counter at many homeopathic stores. And if not for my close personal friendship with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, we might still be battling German measles."

Russert pressed the president on his promise, during last year's presidential campaign, to find cures for paralysis, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, blindness, deafness, and mortality. But Kerry was defiant: "If George W. Bush had been reelected, we would still be suffering from adult acne. What I am saying now is, for those of you who gotta go, gotta go, gotta go right now, help is on the way. For those of you who suffer from the heartbreak of psoriasis, help is on the way. And if a relaxing moment turns into the right moment, Americans will be ready."

Robert W. Dwyer for AP Worldwide

Speaking at a luncheon with members of a shipbuilding local in Essex, Conn., Vice President John Edwards shows where President John Kerry "just cleared up a whole little patch of the worst adult acne you ever did see."

Kerry also spoke of his desire for a more hands-on approach to treating illness and disease. "When I said I wanted to reach out and heal America's wounds, I meant it. This is going to be a kinder, gentler, and, frankly, more holistic nation." At the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Chairman John Basedow is pushing his "Fitness Made Simple for America"

Continued on Page A24

the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 25, 2004

Ex-District Mayor Barry Wants Ballpark Levy 'for Crack'

By SETH ZIMMERMAN

WASHINGTON, Ar

again. You know, a little blow can do a

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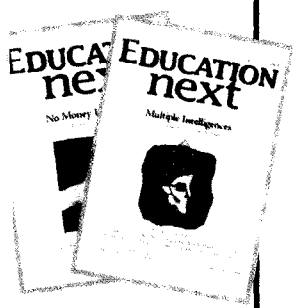

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is best known as a landmark—and controversial—effort by the federal government to hold public schools accountable for their performance by means of standards and tests. It is also a landmark in another, less publicized sense: it requires that all academic courses in every public school be taught by "highly qualified" teachers. This teacher requirement is unprecedented, and it has great promise.

There is a fly in the ointment, however—a problem in the way NCLB is currently written and executed that undermines its own efforts to improve teacher quality. This is a problem that our political leaders are ignoring. They shouldn't be.

On the surface, NCLB's approach makes sense. It mandates that to be highly qualified a teacher must not only have a bachelor's degree and be certified, which the states already require, but also demonstrate competence in the subject being taught. This is the great innovation of the act—it requires competence.

For new teachers, competence can be demonstrated by having a college major in the relevant subject or by taking a rigorous test of knowledge. Veteran teachers can demonstrate competence in these same ways. Or they can do it by meeting a "high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation" (HOUSSE), which the states are allowed to devise on their own.

Herein lies the problem. **The HOUSSE provisions create a loophole big enough to drive three million veteran teachers through—and the states have incentives to do just that.** They are under intense political pressure, especially from teachers unions, to protect the interests of veteran teachers and to ensure that no one loses a job. It is no accident that bad teachers have long been virtually impossible to remove from the classroom. And it is no accident that most states are now designing their HOUSSE standards to ensure that every veteran teacher can meet them, regardless of their true competence.

How do the states pull off this charade? By stipulating that their veteran teachers are not required to take substantive tests or have the relevant college majors, but can instead gain highly qualified status through some combination of teaching experience, classes in professional development, self-compiled portfolios, supervisor evaluations, and other factors that can easily produce positive outcomes for every teacher.

In Arkansas, for example, teachers with five years' experience automatically satisfy the HOUSSE standard and become "highly qualified." In Ohio and Massachusetts, teachers can meet the standard by simply racking up enough hours in professional development courses. In New Hampshire, teachers can do it by engaging in a "self-assessment" with a supervisor and "partner." And so it goes, for virtually every state—making a mockery of the law and ensuring that incompetent and mediocre teachers will not be weeded out.

This is a national travesty. The solution is for Congress to modify NCLB by eliminating the HOUSSE option, and requiring that all veteran teachers either have a college major in their subject area or pass a rigorous test of substantive competence. **The purpose of our public school system is to see that our children are receiving a quality education, not to protect the jobs of the adults who are hired to teach them.** Especially if they can't demonstrate that they are knowledgeable enough to do so.

—Terry M. Moe

Terry M. Moe is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, a member of the Institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, and a professor of political science at Stanford University.

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Today, Joe works at Lockheed Martin near Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, where he brings his in-depth knowledge and experience of Marine One logistics and program security to Team US101.

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